



Nigeria
at 100:
WHAT NEXT?

J.O. Irukwu

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Safari Books Ltd
Ibadan

Published by
Safari Books Ltd
Ile Ori Detu
1, Shell Close
Onireke, Ibadan.
Email: safarinigeria@gmail.com

© J. O. Irukwu

Publisher: Chief Joop Berkhout, OON
Deputy Publisher: George Berkhout

First published 2014

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ISBN: 978-978-8431-44-2

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Founding Fathers of Modern Nigeria and others like them who placed our collective national interests above personal, ethnic and sectional considerations, whose lives have raised the stature of our country above the tragic image of poverty, ethnic conflicts, political instability and corrupt leadership.

It is equally dedicated to my grandchildren and all young Nigerians who hold the future of this potentially great African nation in their hands. My plea to these young ones is that it is always better to light one candle to brighten the scene than to wallow in criticism of the darkness. We pray that they will be better leaders than those of our generation and that under them; Nigeria will see greater peace, unity, progress and prosperity during the next 100 years.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In most of my earlier publications, I made the obvious point that no book is ever the work of a single individual and this one is no exception. In formulating my thoughts, in researching for and in the actual writing of the book, I incurred many debts of gratitude which deserve to be specially acknowledged. The many publications, materials and references cited in the book are the work of others. I thank them all for their intellectual stimulus which have positively influenced this publication.

I wish to record my gratitude to Bishop Mathew Hassan Kukah, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese in Sokoto, for writing a most inspiring foreword to the book. My very special thanks go to several other friends and associates who were generous enough to offer inspiration, ideas, advice and information at various stages while we were working on this text. In this context, I wish to record my special gratitude to Dr. Udu Yakubu who gave me a lot of editorial and research support. Others who deserve special mention in this context include the Reverend Monsignor Professor Obiorah Ike who read through the manuscript and gave very useful advice; the Honourable Justice Anthony I. Iguh, Senator General Ike Nwachukwu

and Chief Emeka Anyaoku were also generous in offering ideas and inspiration.

A special acknowledgement is offered to my family and close friends, especially my daughters, Chizor and Chioma and my nephew, Chikezie Nwosu for their support during the writing of this book. I am indebted to my Secretarial staff and Personal Assistants, especially Louisa and Evans, for the sacrifice of their private time in the typing and proofreading of the manuscript. I cannot forget that this publication was developed with the cooperation of BIMA AFRICA LIMITED.

A number of friends and associates helped me directly and indirectly to formulate thoughts and discuss some of the issues raised in this book and others supplied encouragement in many ways. I thank them all. I am indebted to the many authors and publishers whose works I was privileged to consult.

Finally, I wish to record my thanks to the management and staff of my publishers, Safari Books Ltd, especially the Chairman, Chief Joop Berkhout, for their assistance and cooperation in seeing this book through to press in record time.

In recording my gratitude to all the individuals and organizations mentioned above for the assistance they gave me, for which I am most thankful, I accept full responsibility for any errors, shortcomings and omissions in the book.

J. Ogbonnaya Irukwu

FOREWORD

There has been and there will continue to be series of conflicting and contradictory but intense debates, interpretations, evaluations about the nature and the future of our country. A little bit of this showed up in the wake of the preparations for the celebrations when some voices rose up to both condemn and appreciate the celebrations. It is even more significant to note that as long as we are alive, we all never see things through the same lenses. Society and culture are dynamic and events, activities and individuals and their actions will continue to be subjected and judged based on the experiences of the writers of history. Thus, governance systems, key actors, Constitutions and Laws will continue to be evaluated and reevaluated by those in different moments of history, each merely extending the nature of their experiences.

Yet, although these debates and arguments will always persist, it will be mistaken to assume that history is the hands of a clock merely swinging between hours, minutes and seconds. There are certain facts that historians however cannot change and those are facts, facts that we often refer to as *facts of history*. For example, was there a man in history called Lord Lugard and the role he played in Nigeria? Did the British enter this land mass called

Nigeria? Was there a war or did they merely walk into the vast expanse of land? Are there particular dates when wars were won or lost? Are there recorded speeches of these actors? The answers to the above questions will be yes. However, what we can debate about is how different individuals or communities then saw that experience.

For example, the influence of the feudal system is still part of us. The consequences of the destruction and defeat of the caliphate are still with us. The views of the occupants of the caliphate still nurse a sense of loss. However, within the same seemingly homogenous empire set up specifically to find a space for Islam, the Fulanis and the indigenous Hausas, then as now, have always seen and interpreted the history differently. The descendants of the traditional kingdoms who preceded the British have a different narrative of the nature of their experiences and they will view them with either joy or sorrow, nostalgia or anger.

How we manage, process, reject or incorporate these realities into life and how they help to shape our sense of nationhood and identity is the major contribution of a well thought out account and review of history. A coherent and comprehensive account of history, rather than pull society back, should energise us as we unite to ensure that we do not repeat the same mistakes. The positive roles of individuals and communities in shaping these realities should be benchmarked so that we know which mistakes to avoid and which achievements to build upon.

In his well thought out book, Professor Irukwu has taken on this challenge.

Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah
Catholic Bishop of Sokoto

PREFACE

The origin of the nation state now known as Nigeria can be traced to the year 1914 when the British protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were merged by Sir Frederick Lugard, the British Colonial Governor-General of these territories at that time. Before the arrival of the British, these territories were independent African states and kingdoms at different levels of social and economic development that had existed for several centuries, running their affairs in line with their customs and traditions.

This act of amalgamation, which was carried out primarily for the administrative convenience of the British colonialists, was a landmark event in the lives of the people who inhabit the country we now know as Nigeria. It marked the beginning of the modern Nigerian nation, which clocked 100 years in January 2014. In keeping with African customs and traditions, important landmark events in both our individual and corporate lives are generally celebrated, not only for purposes of merriment and joyful celebrations as such, but more importantly as an opportunity for stock taking and a serious examination of the achievements, failures and successes recorded. It is in this context that many Nigerians welcome the decision of the Federal

Government to mark the centenary of Nigeria as a nation, in the form of a modest, constructive and reflective celebration.

This book is our own sober and genuine contribution to this exercise. It is a serious attempt to document in modest and constructive language our journey as a modern nation in the past 100 years, highlighting the landmark events during this period. In identifying these major events, our objective is to indicate the lessons we have learnt or should have learnt in the process, as well as the direction in which we should be moving in our overall national interest. This is important if we seriously intend to survive the next 100 years as a great nation in the very competitive world environment of the 21st century, which is fast becoming a lot more challenging as we move into a more uncertain future.

For the convenience of the reader, the book is divided into four parts with a total of 22 chapters. The first part, with seven chapters deals with the historical background starting with the early history and covering the pre-colonial years, independence and the challenges of nationhood, military intervention in politics and governance, the civil war, the return to democracy and the continuing challenges of development.

Part 2, which examines the major impediments to nation building, has a total of five chapters covering such important subjects as the leadership problem, the negative problem of ethnicity, the perennial and the disturbing problem of corruption. Chapters 11 and 12 in this part deal with the problem of the Nigerian delinquents and their incursion and invasion of the country's leadership, thereby compounding the country's already complicated leadership problem.

Part 3 makes a case for healing our national wounds through national reconciliation, transformation and patriotism. This part of the book also makes a case for a united, viable and stable Nigerian nation, and examines the reasons why we must remove all the identified impediments to our national progress and development if we must achieve the desired national objectives. Chapters 14 and 15 in this part discuss the importance of patriotism and the role of ethnic organizations as building blocks for development. It also explores the role of women in nation building and the concept of gender mainstreaming in the Nigerian context. Chapter 17 completes this part by identifying some of the important lessons for a better Nigeria.

Part 4 attempts to answer the question as to which direction we should be heading as a nation after the centenary celebrations. Since the emphasis in our general theme is change to a better society by way of transformation and reformation, especially in the critical areas identified in this book, this section starts with the role of the family as the unit that lays the foundation and sets the values that influence the character, judgement and behaviour of our young people who will subsequently become important citizens and members of the leadership elite. Chapter 19 makes the case for the reformation and restructuring of the polity to promote national stability and to reduce the cost of governance. Chapter 20 examines the present federal government's transformation exercise and pleads that it should be pursued with sincerity and commitment, to ensure that it does not end up like all the transformation agendas of previous administrations which were abandoned at the end of the tenure of its

sponsoring administration. Chapter 21 discusses the road to the future. The book also makes the point that the reformation and transformation exercise in a country like Nigeria would only succeed if it is a team effort involving the entire nation; the exercise should not be left to the government of the day as if it is only a problem of the current political leadership.

Finally, our submission in this book is that in the highly competitive world of the 21st century, the most important growth and survival factors for any nation are information, knowledge, power and security. In recognition of this fact, we have assembled in this book relevant information about the strengths and weaknesses of this potentially great African nation. These are all information that the country's leadership at all levels deserve to know and acknowledge as they pursue our growth and development in the 21st century and beyond. Several other well meaning Nigerians and friends of Nigeria have spoken and written about these issues over the years and all of them seem united in the belief that most of the country's leadership elite do not seem to be listening to these complaints. This book is therefore a passionate appeal to the country's leaders at all levels of our society to use the opportunity provided by the centenary events to listen and join in the transformation and reformation crusade geared towards the elimination of the negative impediments that seem to have conspired, over the years, in delaying our march to greatness.

Trusting that this book will achieve the patriotic objectives that compelled us to embark on the research efforts that led to its conception and birth, I wish to take this opportunity to thank all those who assisted me in the

research and editorial efforts, as well as my many other friends and associates who played very positive roles leading to the successful publication of this book.

Professor J. O. Irukwu



CHAPTER 1



EARLY HISTORY

The origins of the modern nation-state called Nigeria can be traced to several local and foreign activities that culminated in the coming together, through various means, of many small and large communities within the vast affected geographical area. Through centuries and decades of local territorial conquests and expansion and the finishing military work of the British, Nigeria as a distinct nation was fully formed on January 1, 1914.

Three critical elements are of utmost importance in an examination of the early history of the nation up till 1960 when she became a politically independent nation-state. These are the colonisation of the territories and communities that made up the country, the amalgamation of the country, and the constitutional developments that eventually brought about political independence.

Colonisation

As the race by European nations to provide raw materials for their industries and markets for their finished products raged on, competition for African territories became more intense. This led to the scramble for Africa by Europeans towards the end of the 19th century. The struggle for African territories, they believed, would guarantee constant supply of raw materials for their industries. In order to reduce undue conflicts among these European powers, the Berlin Conference was held in 1885 to peacefully allocate African communities to themselves.

The Conference which was staged at the instance of Otto von Bismarck of Germany had in attendance all the leading powers in Europe at the time. Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal and others discussed and allocated African territories to themselves. Territories effectively occupied by one of these powers could not be contested by any other. The Conference advocated the principle of 'dual mandate' which stated that the interest of Africa and Europe were best served by maintaining free access to the African continent for trade and by providing African protectorates the benefits of Christianity and civilisation. It acknowledged Britain's authority in the Niger Basin area, but insisted that only effective occupation would assure full international recognition. This resulted in the British establishment of a colonial administration in the area.

The area called Nigeria was a geographical enclave with peoples of different ethno-cultural and socio-political backgrounds. Through its superior military might, the British were able to establish their control in the area. The entity which became known as Nigeria had established

their own traditional systems of governance and ways of life long before the arrival of the Europeans, and were not ready to adapt to any foreign imposition. Thus, indigenous communities had to put up stiff resistance against any form of foreign intrusion and dominance.

Notable among the kings that opposed British authorities was King Jaja of Opobo. He made spirited efforts at resisting British imperialism in Opobo Kingdom, which he founded in 1866, following his success at the wars in Bonny. Opobo was strategically located between Bonny and the hinterland, King Jaja controlled trade and politics in this delta area. Available literature has it that he was shipping oil directly to Liverpool.

The British consul could not tolerate this situation. An offer of a treaty of 'protection' was made to King Jaja if he would surrender his sovereignty. After Jaja's initial opposition, he was assured imprecisely that neither his authority nor the sovereignty of Opobo would be threatened. Based on the assurances received, King Jaja went on to regulate trade and impose levies on British traders, to the point where he issued an order to stop trade on the river until one British firm agreed to pay duties. Unperturbed by the Consul's threat to bombard Opobo if those activities were not stopped, he stuck to his guns. Jaja, oblivious of the fact that Africa had already been partitioned and that Opobo was then part of the territories allocated to Great Britain, was tricked into holding a meeting with the British Consul on board a warship. Jaja was apprehended and sent to Accra where he was summarily tried and found guilty of 'treaty breaking' and 'blocking the highways of trade.' With his arrest, the resistance in Opobo Kingdom was brought to an end.

The British authorities also faced opposition from King Nana of Itsekiri Kingdom. At the declaration of a protectorate on the Oil River area in 1885 by the British, King Nana's power increased significantly, but was shortlived as the British wanted to take over the economic and political powers he wielded. British merchants, on their own, fixed low prices for palm oil which King Nana refused to accept. Consequently, he stopped trading with them and the acting Consul-General decided to have him removed. When he was summoned by the acting Consul-General to answer charges, Nana retorted that he was not a servant of the British and if the official wanted to see him, he should come to Ebrohemie. In 1894, the British withdrew the recognition accorded him as the King of the Itsekiri. Sensing that the British wanted to capture him, King Nana ordered a general mobilisation of his army and fortified Ebrohemie, but that could not save him as the British used their superior military warhead to bring the Itsekiri Kingdom to its knees.

The third kingdom conquered by the British authorities was Benin. Many writers believe that this was prompted by the killing of the members of the Philip's expedition to Benin on January 4, 1897 by Benin soldiers. A number of foreign writers like P. A. Bacon, Allan Biosragon and Roth considered the Philip's expedition as a peaceful one embarked upon for the sole purpose of stopping human sacrifice. These authors argue that the British government saw as outrageous the practice of human sacrifice in Benin Kingdom, an area which was one hundred miles within the colony of Lagos.

However, other writers had countered such assumption, insisting that Philip's expedition was driven

by both economic and political reasons. Proponents of this view argue that when France and Germany became industrialised, the competition for tropical products became so intense that Britain had to adopt a more vigorous policy than staying at the coast to obtain the product of the hinterland through the coastal middlemen. Hence they sought for a way to penetrate into Benin. Benin forest was hugely endowed with rubber trees and, interestingly, Dunlop had perfected the pneumatic rubber tyre which he invented in 1887, the year that Oba Ovonranme became king. The British officials wanted free trade to which Oba Ovonranme was opposed.

In order to actualise their ambition, the British officials recommended that force must be used to overpower the Oba on account of what they termed 'his barbarous practices and human sacrifices.' The evidence indicates that the plan to use force had been hatched prior to 1895. After Oba Ovonranme and the British representative, MacDonald, had concluded discussions on the conditions of trade, Macdonald reported that there was no longer any need to send a punitive expedition to the Kingdom. But Moore called for the use of force and advised that it should take place between January and March 1897. When the British officials executed their plans, the Oba and his chiefs were deposed and tried. Five of them received death sentences, while two others committed suicide before trial. Oba Ovonranme was sent on exile.

These conquests, amongst others, paved the way for the British to establish their system of administration in the area to be known as Nigeria. Sir Frederick Lugard, who was the commissioner of the protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1900, was concerned with the task of translating

the commercial sphere of influence inherited from the Royal Niger Company, into a viable territorial unit under effective British political control. In pursuance of this goal, he employed the use of force when the option of diplomacy had failed. Lugard succeeded in northern Nigeria through the rulers who had been defeated. His strategy was to confirm in office any emir who had accepted British authority, abandoned the slave trade and cooperated with the British.

Amalgamation

Having completed his six-year term as governor of Hong Kong, Sir Frederick Lugard came back to Nigeria in 1912 to realise the unification of northern and southern protectorates. The process of unifying Nigeria started as far back as 1906 when the Lagos colony was annexed to the protectorate of southern Nigeria. With that, the task of completing full unification became viable. In 1914, the southern and northern protectorate were finally amalgamated, leading to the birth of a new nation, Nigeria. The Governor-General, Sir Frederick Lugard, applied the principle of indirect rule to the entire country. Colonial officers were expected to have minimal input in the running of the affairs of various areas as the traditional rulers were empowered to run the country. Amalgamation achieved, as it were, a limited unification of the three regions administratively. Each of the regions was led by a lieutenant-governor and they delivered government services. Since indirect rule had recorded great successes in the north, the emirs continued their role of administration. In Yoruba land, the traditional leaders who were hired to serve as administrators were greatly limited

by Christianity and Western education. In the East, warrant chiefs who were used to carry out the indirect rule system were strongly opposed by the people because they did not have the legitimacy of the traditional institution they represented.

On the whole, the process of unification was bedeviled by constant divergent views held by regions on governance between the northern and southern protectorates. For the British, amalgamation achieved the purposes of administrative and economic balances in the management of the new country called Nigeria. The British system of indirect rule involved regular meetings between colonial authorities and traditional rulers and these were designed to meet each region's needs. This was clearly exemplified in the south where the governor needed the approval of the legislative council, but legislation in the north came in the form of a decree jointly signed by the governor and emir.

Constitutional Development and the Struggle for Independence

The first semblance of constitutional development in Nigeria can be traced to the conquest of Lagos in 1861 by the British. A year later, Lagos was declared a new Crown Colony or Settlement and this was followed by the first introduction of colonial constitution in Nigeria. A legislative council that was saddled with the responsibility of advising the governor in drafting the legislation for the colony was inaugurated. Until 1928, the legislative council was dominated by the ex-slaves who had returned to the country, because indigenous people were largely uneducated and so could not effectively participate in the law-making process.

The annexation of the Lagos colony to the Southern Nigeria protectorate in 1906 expanded the jurisdiction of the legislative council to the southern protectorate. It also necessitated an increase in the membership of the legislative council, though the official and unofficial membership of the legislative council did not translate to increased power as the council remained mainly an advisory body. The Nigerian council was introduced in 1913 in furtherance of Nigeria's constitutional development, though it did not go beyond the role which the legislative council played, which was advisory.

A significant leap in the nation's constitutional development was recorded with the introduction of the Clifford Constitution of 1922. The constitution sought to replace the Nigerian council with a new legislative council whose power would cover the entire southern Nigeria, while the northern protectorate would be administered by the Governor's proclamations. Tamuno (1967) identified poor transportation, the size of the country, communication challenges, cultural diversity and legal differences between southern and the northern protectorates as some of the reasons for the exclusion of the north from the legislative council. Matters like the annual budget, expenditure and custom duties that bothered the north were entertained by the council.

The Clifford Constitution was reputed to have introduced the elective principle for the first time in the country. The 46-member legislative council comprised 27 unofficial and 19 official members, out of which four unofficial members were elected through limited male adult franchise – three from Lagos and one from Calabar. The Clifford Constitution created an executive council to

advise the governor. Another positive aspect of the Clifford Constitution was that it fast-tracked the formation of political organisations.

As a result of the above, Nigerian nationalists like Dr. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Dr. J.C Vaughan, Dr. Kofo Abayomi, Ernest Ikoli, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo, most of whom were either members of the West African Student Union or drew inspiration from American activists like Marcus Garvey and W.E.B Bios, seized the opportunity to launch themselves into the political arena. For example, Dr. Herbert Macaulay formed the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923 to contest elections. The NNDP's dominance of Lagos politics did not give colonial powers cause for concern as it only attacked isolated policies of the colonial administration and not the colonial system itself. This approach did not meet the yearnings of a new set of more radical Nigerians who were opposed to colonial rule in its totality.

A new group thus sought an avenue to express their political ambition through the formation of Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM) in 1936, and this triggered the political decline of the NNDP. At that stage, political actors had not yet set out on their political journey with nationalist ideals. For instance, Dr. Herbert Macaulay was satisfied with his party's dominance of Lagos politics, while Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe adopted Pan-Africanism as his approach. As time wore on, the need to champion a nationalist ideology became clearer following the post-World War II period when Nigeria experienced harsh political and economic conditions under the British rule. Driving the nationalist agenda then, were soldiers who had fought alongside British soldiers at various battle fronts.

The Nigerian Trade Union was also instrumental to the nationalist cause. In 1945, a national general strike was organised by Pa Michael Imoudu, thus giving the union a nationalist role. The struggle for independence was not without some hitches. Ethnic divisions in the NYM as a result of ethnic loyalties slowed the pace of progress. Internal crisis in the NYM resulted in Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Dr. Macaulay leaving the party to form the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC). The Northern People's Congress (NPC) came into the political arena in the late 1940s with a few Western-educated northern Muslims. Having secured the blessing of the emirs, NPC was formed to counter the activities of thriving southern-based parties. The NPC, led by Ahmadu Bello, sought to preserve the northern social and political institutions from southern influence. The NPC was ready to bring changes to the educational and economic life of the north. Though its focal area was the north, Ahmadu Bello supported the Party's plans to use the north's population to win control of the national government.

In 1946, the Richard Constitution received British parliamentary approval at Westminster and was consequently promulgated in Nigeria. It was in response to agitation by some educated elites for greater local participation in governance. Though it retained effective powers in the hands of the Governor-General and his appointed Executive council, the Richard Constitution provided for an expanded legislative council charged with the task of legislating on issues that affected the entire country. Regionalism was one of the main features provided for in the Richard Constitution. The introduction of regional legislative bodies marked the recognition of

Nigeria's diversity and laid the groundwork for Nigeria's federalism. The attraction of the Richard Constitution to the British authorities was hinged on three main issues: regionalism would, to some extent, tone down the yearnings of the nationalists, it would ensure that the legislature did not become too large, and finally, it would guard against the takeover of the central authority by the educated few.

The significance of the Richard Constitution included the integration of the north and south for legislative purpose, the empowerment of the legislative council to make laws for the entire country and the reduction on income qualification from £100 to £50.

The Macpherson Constitution of 1951, many believe, was Nigeria's first indigenous constitution geared at growing a strong government because a chosen committee consulted widely across the length and breadth of the country in order to draw up the constitution. The select Committee of Legislative Council analysed the pitfalls of the Richard Constitution in concert with various stakeholders. In 1950, an inclusive constitutional conference adopted federalism and the upgrading of the three regions' administrative status to political regions. The Macpherson Constitution reinvigorated party activities and political participation as it provided for a dual course of law-making, bringing about both regional autonomy and federal union. It gave strong voice to regionalism by ensuring that laws made at regional level were not overridden at the federal House of Representatives. However, it limited franchise by economic status and gender. The governor still retained the power to veto any bill which he considered inconsistent with the overall interests of the nation.

After three years of operating the Macpherson Constitution, the Lyttleton Constitution came into effect. The Lyttleton Constitution further strengthened the federal principle and prepared the way for Nigeria's independence. In 1953, a member of the House of Representatives, Chief Anthony Enahoro of the Action Group moved a motion for Nigeria's independence. The motion which was opposed by the northern members of the legislature, who felt that the north was not prepared for independence, caused a lot of tension in the House. The NPC's members only supported the motion for independence not with a view to a specific date, but with an open-ended notion of independence as soon as it was practicable and possible.

Preparatory to Nigeria's independence, the London Constitutional Conference, presided over by the Rt. Hon. Alan Lennox-Boyd, granted self- governance in internal affairs to the East and West. Members of the House of Representatives were increased to 312 while the Senate was established. The office of the Prime Minister of the federation was also created. Elections into the expanded House of Representatives and the newly created Senate were held in December 1959. The NPC garnered the majority of votes, as announced, followed by the NCNC. The Action Group came third. The course of independence was finally set in motion as the country awaited the birth of the First Republic. With these political institutions in place, the Union Jack was lowered, and the Nigerian flag, green-white-green, was hoisted to signal the end of colonial rule and the birth of an independent nation.



CHAPTER 2



INDEPENDENCE AND THE CHALLENGES OF NATIONHOOD

On October 1, 1960, Nigeria achieved her political independence and this marked the end of 100 years of British colonial rule which had started in 1861 with the British annexation of Lagos. Before the Independence Constitution, which came into force on October 1, 1960, the country was governed by the 1954 Constitution. The Independence Constitution was the product of the Nigerian Constitutional Conference held in London in 1958 under the supervision of the British Colonial Office and attended by leaders of the main political parties for the purpose of producing an independence constitutional arrangement. In keeping with the political climate of that period, the North was primarily represented by the NPC, led by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto. The East, represented by the NCNC, was led by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe,

while the West, represented by the Action Group, was led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

The Conference unanimously agreed that Nigeria would become independent on October 1, 1960 under a new constitution known as the 1960 Independence Constitution. This Constitution provided for the post of a Prime Minister; to be elected in a national pre-independence democratic election. It also provided for the enlargement of the Federal House of Representatives to 320 members, to be elected on a direct national basis; except in the Northern Region where, in accordance with the prevailing Muslim religious practice, women were not allowed the right to vote.

The Pre-Independence Federal Elections

The pre-independence federal elections took place in 1959. As expected, the three main political parties won in each of their home regions. The result was that the NPC became the dominant party in the North, while the NCNC emerged the winner in the East and the AG in the West. The general view of most political commentators of the period was that the pattern of the post-independence election results emphasised, once again, the supremacy of regional and ethnic loyalties over national loyalty in Nigerian politics. As will become even more obvious in subsequent chapters, this pattern continued to haunt Nigeria for several decades and has affected the development of the nation as one entity. Unfortunately, the leadership elite have, on balance, not succeeded in resolving this problem in the overall national interest.

Another unfortunate feature of the post-independence elections of 1959, which was created by the nature of the constitution, was the fact that no single political party

could form the federal government; the only answer was a coalition of at least two political parties. After a period of negotiations that followed the elections, the NCNC decided to form a coalition with the NPC, and this consigned the Action Group to the role of the opposition party. Prior to the formation of that coalition, there were rumours to the effect that these two southern parties were in the process of forming the Federal Government, leaving the NPC as the opposition party. There were actually moves in that direction, but these did not materialise. When matters settled at the end of the political negotiations, what finally resulted was an NPC/NCNC coalition government. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the deputy leader of the NPC, became the first Prime Minister of Nigeria. The leader of the NCNC, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, settled for the post of President of the Senate, on the understanding that he would take over the post of Governor-General from the then British Governor-General when the latter relinquished the post later that year. On November 16, 1960, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe became the first Nigerian Governor-General of the Federation of Nigeria.

Commencement of the Task of Nation Building

After the extensive independence celebration that lasted for well over a week, Nigerians settled down to the task of nation building. This task has not been an easy one, judging by the events that followed the achievement of independence, some of which are chronicled in this book. The first six years of independence, dominated by the founding fathers, were quite eventful. There were several serious threats to the new nation, but these were overcome by the political leadership. Arising from these events, some

cynics have described Nigeria as the country where 'the best is difficult to achieve, but where the worst is often threatened, but never really happens.' Relating this description to the first six years of independence, it could be said that many good things happened in the country during this period; but the best was never achieved, and although Nigeria got close to disaster and disintegration, she managed to survive.

As was expected, the country followed the British parliamentary system of government after independence. It was smooth-sailing at the beginning, but because the foundation for discord had been laid when the regions were given virtual autonomy to the detriment of the centre, problems soon emerged. Two years after independence, there was a state of emergency in the Western Region, and by 1964, there was a major constitutional crisis, which nearly wrecked the country. Despite these early political and constitutional problems, the country made some remarkable progress, to the extent that many responsible Nigerians felt convinced that Nigeria had achieved more in four years in the context of overall development, than was achieved under the British colonial administrations for several decades before independence; particularly in the areas of education, health, commerce and industry, agriculture and transportation. In the field of education, positive steps were taken by all the regional governments to rectify the imbalances in the educational development of their regions. More secondary schools were built and the numbers of universities in the country were increased from two to five. Similar progress was recorded in commerce and industry.

The Federal Government and the governments of the three regions sponsored economic missions to several parts

of the world to attract foreign investors. As a result, many new industries were established in a country where there were virtually no major industrial concerns before the period. During these early post-independence years, the government of the federation developed keen interest in agriculture to the extent that agricultural produce became the country's major foreign exchange earner. From all accounts, the governments were determined to revitalise and invest substantially in agriculture and agro-allied industries. This trend was visible in the three regions as evidenced by the groundnut pyramids in the North, the massive cocoa trade in the West and the extensive palm produce and oil palm industries in the East.

In the Eastern Region, Dr. Michael Okpara's government established several farm settlements to give employment to young school leavers and to increase agricultural production. In the Western Region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo's government took steps soon after independence to revive the cocoa farms which played a key role then as a foreign exchange earner. The Northern regional government under Sir Ahmadu Bello also took positive steps to increase agricultural production generally, with special attention to such areas as groundnut and cotton production as well as other agricultural products.

The Federal Government established agricultural schools and experimental farms in different parts of the country to promote agriculture. It extended and modernised the Nigerian Railways during this period. It was also during this period that the £4 million Toll Bridge over the River Niger was constructed. Most of the federal A1 trunk roads were expanded and reconstructed during this golden period of post-independence Nigeria.

In 1961, a year after independence, the then Federal Minister of Transport, Alhaji Inuwa Wada, awarded the contract for the reconstruction of most Federal A1 Trunk roads at a cost of £2.9 million, which at the time was a large sum. From all accounts, the contracts were not inflated and the roads were actually constructed to the satisfaction of both the government and the people. During this period, remarkable progress was made in the health sector. There was a general improvement in the country's health service; new hospitals and medical centres were built in each region. Facilities at the University College in Ibadan were improved and increased, and regional universities were encouraged to establish their own teaching hospitals. The Lagos University Teaching Hospital and Medical School were established by the Federal Government.

In the field of international relations and diplomacy, Nigeria made great impact and enjoyed a positive image and reputation in the international arena during this period. At independence, the country became the 99th member of the United Nations. As soon as Nigeria was admitted to the international organisation, the country's leaders quickly learnt that the only way the country could fulfill its obligations to Africa and other developing countries in the world arena, was by adopting a positive and realistic African approach to international issues, and it proceeded to do so. In a speech in the Federal House of Representatives on 4th November 1961, the then Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr. Jaja Anucha Wachukwu, speaking on Nigeria's foreign policy, listed the areas in which Nigeria had achieved leadership internationally:

- (a) Its condemnation of colonialism at the UN;
- (b) Its demand that all African countries must become independent not later than 1970;
- (c) The demand for an end to nuclear and atomic tests and the breaking off of diplomatic relations with France in 1961 over that country's nuclear tests in the Sahara. It turned out that Nigeria was the only African country that had the courage to do so.

This positive and courageous posture soon after independence earned Nigeria great respect in international circles. As a result, its citizens were respected by their host countries and foreign business associates. Undoubtedly, great development was recorded during this period in most aspects of the country's national life, including such vital areas as law-making and the creation of institutions designed to raise the country's stature as a modern nation. Laws were enacted to strengthen the country's key institutions and to promote commerce and industry, international trade and the financial services industry, such as the Marine Insurance Act of 1961 as well as the enactment of the first ever Insurance Act in 1961, amongst others. The leadership elite were then at their best. They were generally fair and reasonable, better focused, selfless, committed and more interested in the well-being of the ordinary Nigerians than in the pursuit of their personal wealth, which later became fashionable following the commencement of the process of invasion of the country's leadership by delinquents.

Progress and Stability Disrupted by Political Upheavals

The above account must not be taken as an indication that the first six years following independence were all rosy and peaceful. On the contrary, the period witnessed its fair share of 'palaver and trouble' as might be expected in the kind of plural developing societies that exists in Nigeria.

The first major trouble started in the Western Region in 1962 due to the rift within the Action Group between the supporters of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his deputy, Chief S.L. Akintola. This disagreement was so serious that it threatened the security of the Western Region as well as the stability of the country. An attempt to dismiss Akintola as the Premier of the Western Region led to disturbances in the Regional Assembly, forcing the Federal Government to intervene and declare a state of emergency in the Region. A sole administrator, Chief Moses A. Majekodunmi, was appointed by the Federal Government to run the affairs of the Region and a judicial enquiry was set up to investigate allegations of corruption in the management of the Region's affairs.

Chief Awolowo and 27 others were soon arrested on charges of treasonable felony. At the end of the trial that lasted about eight months, a Lagos High Court, presided over by Honourable Justice George Sowemimo, found Chief Awolowo guilty and sentenced him to ten years imprisonment. On appeal, the conviction was upheld, but the sentence reduced to seven years. Chief Anthony Enahoro, then one of the leaders of the Action Group under Chief Awolowo, was in Britain at the time of Chief Awolowo's trial and was later extradited to Nigeria to face charges of complicity in the same plot for which Chief

Awolowo was tried and convicted. At the end of the hearing, he was found guilty and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. On appeal, the conviction was upheld, but the sentence was reduced to 10 years.

At the end of the sole administrator's assignment in the Western Region, the state of emergency was lifted and Chief Akintola was returned to head a reconstituted government of the Western Region. The overall effect of these troubles in the West was a weakening of the regional authority and the power base of the Action Group, which had become divided between the Awolowo and Akintola factions. Shortly after, in 1963, the Federal Government created the Mid-West Region, carved out of the former Western Region of Nigeria.

Disputed Census and Elections results, 1962-1965

Other serious national problems that affected the fragile Nigerian state during this period were the controversial and disputed census figures results of 1962 and 1963, the 1964 nationwide strike, which was a major industrial upheaval, and the more serious upheaval caused by the seriously disputed federal elections of December 30, 1964.

From many accounts, the elections were neither free nor fair and serious malpractices were reported from many parts of the country. The year 1965 started with a major national crisis due to these elections. Under the provision of the constitution in force at the time, the President, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe had a statutory duty to invite the leader of the party that secured the highest number of seats in the election to form a government. As most Nigerians disputed the federal election results, the President hesitated for sometime before he called upon Sir Abubakar

Tafawa Balewa to form a government. There was great tension in the country while the nation anxiously waited for the President to make his important constitutional decision. At the end, despite protests from some quarters, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, whose party had recorded the highest number of seats in the disputed elections, was invited by the President to form the Federal Government, and once again another dangerous crisis was averted.

Disputed Western Regional Elections, November 1965

Shortly after recovering from the national crisis arising from both the disputed censuses and the December 1964 federal elections results, another crisis erupted to further threaten the fragile parliamentary democracy of Nigeria's First Republic.

In November 1965, the Western regional parliamentary elections were held at a time when Chief S.L. Akintola's government had become discredited amongst the ordinary people of the Western Region who formed the bulk of the electorate. The general belief at the time in the Western Region was that Chief Akintola's party would be defeated by Chief Awolowo's Action Group in any free and fair elections in the Region. At that time, the political atmosphere was charged and the entire country was divided into two main warring political factions grouped together under the names of the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) and the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) respectively. The NNA was made up of Akintola's breakaway faction of the Action Group, which had changed its name to the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and the NPC. Sir Ahmadu Bello

was the leader of this new coalition, presumably because he was the leader of the senior party, the NPC. UPGA, which opposed the NNA, was made up of the NCNC and what was left of Chief Awolowo's faction of the Action Group.

This was a difficult period in the political history of the Action Group. Its most dynamic leaders, Chief Awolowo and Chief Enahoro, were in prison. With Chief Awolowo imprisoned and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe insulated from party politics, because he was holding the office of the President of Nigeria, the mantle of leadership of the UPGA alliance had to fall on Dr. M.I. Okpara, the Premier of the Eastern Region and President of the NCNC. The third political group in the country which supported the UPGA alliance was the Northern Progressive Front made up of the two opposition parties in the North, the United Middle Belt Congress, under the leadership of Mr. Joseph S. Tarka and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) led by Mallam Aminu Kano. This was the political setting in November 1965 when the Western Region elections were held. UPGA was determined to win the Western elections in order to gain control of the East, West and Lagos, while Chief Akintola and the NNA were determined not to lose.

At the end of the elections, it was described as a national disaster by all independent accounts. These accounts maintained that every known electoral malpractice had taken place and that the election was anything but free and fair. Electoral officers and polling agents, it was reported, were kidnapped, dismissed, shot or assaulted. Ballot papers and other election documents were destroyed or falsified and candidates with a minority of votes were declared elected. In the process, the world

witnessed the virtual destruction of the new concept of parliamentary democracy.

In the Western Region, which was the main scene of this national tragedy, the principal actors were Chief Akintola and Alhaji Adegbenro who had become the interim leader of the Action Group during the temporary absence of Chief Awolowo. Both leaders, Chief Akintola and Alhaji Adegbenro, claimed that they had won the elections and both demanded the right to form a government in the Region. In the ensuing confusion, Adegbenro was arrested by the Federal authorities and the already charged atmosphere virtually got out of hand.

As a direct result of these developments, there were wild demonstrations by UPGA supporters in the East against Adegbenro's arrest. In the West and its environs, there were riots, arson, assassinations, and total confusion. In the process, political opponents and prominent citizens were attacked almost everywhere and some were drenched with petrol and set on fire. For this petrol drenching operation, the slogan '*wetie*' was coined by the angry mob. Political thugs and unemployed youths in the West and in parts of Lagos took advantage of the confusion and lawlessness to extort money from travellers. Pedestrians and travellers suspected to be supporters of the opposing party were attacked and either killed, assaulted, or deprived of their cars or other property. Although no official figure was issued as to the number of persons who died during and after the Western elections of 1965, unofficial estimates at the time put the figure at about three thousand. As if to ensure that these disturbances received the widest global attention, the timing was such that it continued until early in January 1966 when the first ever Commonwealth

Conference held outside London was taking place in Lagos. Naturally, the world press and news hunters covering the Conference had a field day reporting different versions of this national tragedy.

In the face of this confusion, what many of the foreign journalists and other independent observers could not understand, was why all the violence and lawlessness were taking place in the Western Region and Lagos, just a few kilometers from the Commonwealth Conference venue, without anyone, including the Prime Minister and the President being able to intervene to stop the drift. The Prime Minister who had the effective federal authority to intervene as the executive head of the Federal Government, was generally regarded as a gentleman and a fair-minded person. Many Nigerians regarded him as a peace-loving person totally committed to the pursuit of justice and fair play. His admirers saw it as his legal and moral duty to stop the chaos and anarchy in the West. When he appeared unable or unwilling to stop the chaos, his critics pointed out that in 1962, when there was a minor crisis in the same Western Region, he had, as Prime Minister, declared a state of emergency; however in 1966 when a more serious situation demanded the intervention of the Federal Government, no such action was taken. The same critics alleged that the reason for this was that an NNA man was in power in January 1966, whereas in 1962, it was Alhaji Adegbenro, an Action Group/UPGA man who was the Premier of the Western Region. They argued that although Tafawa Balewa was the *dejure* Prime Minister, he was not acting independently. He acted on the 'order' of his party leaders in Kaduna who, they claimed, were working in concert with Akintola and the NNA to ensure that the UPGA did not assume power in the West.

As is always the case in most African societies, whenever there is a national crisis of this magnitude, all sorts of negative and destructive rumours start spreading throughout the country. The most persistent of these rumours, published in most pro- Action Group/NCNC alliance newspapers, were those that alleged that leaders of the NNA that controlled the Federal Government had agreed that all UPGA leaders and their supporters in the Western Region would be arrested and that all army units suspected to be supporters or sympathisers of UPGA would be disbanded.

Whether these rumours were true or false remained uncertain, but the only thing that was clear was that by the beginning of January 1966, Nigeria was certainly heading for a major disaster. This disaster ultimately led to the tragic military coup, followed by a chain of military coups and massive, unnecessary killings including a destructive civil war which cost the country millions of lives, the destruction of its national assets, and three decades of military rule; which clearly did not improve the nation or correct its ills and wrongs as the soldiers had promised they would when they seized power from the civilian political leaders.



CHAPTER 3



MILITARY INTERVENTION IN POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Between 1956 and 1966, as Nigeria was moving from self-government to independence in a politically charged atmosphere, the only important national institution that remained insulated from the politics of ethnic and regional rivalry of the period, was the Nigerian military. From the pre-independence years to the early years of the national crisis, the Nigerian military had acquired a high reputation for discipline, integrity, professional competence and loyalty to the Nigerian nation, as opposed to ethnic, sectional or regional loyalty. Its officer corps, which was as good as any in the world, had served with the United Nations forces in the Congo in the early 1960s and left an impeccable reputation for discipline, integrity and reliability. The officers and men themselves were truly united Nigerians committed to the preservation of a united

nation for the benefit of all Nigerians. Given that the military was united and genuinely national in all respects, most well-meaning Nigerians remained convinced that there was still hope for the country as a single political entity, the divisive regional and ethnic politics notwithstanding.

The Politicisation of the Military

Unfortunately, the military did not remain insulated from the country's ethnic and regional rivalry for very long. By the end of 1965 and early in January 1966, there were persistent rumours that the military might intervene and seize power from the civilians 'to clean up the political mess' and the prevailing unhealthy political environment. Many serious-minded Nigerians did not take these rumours seriously, because they believed that such an intervention was not possible in a country like Nigeria. In any case, the military intervention rumour was generally dismissed in most professional, academic and government circles on the ground that a military coup could not take place in a large multi-ethnic African country as complex as Nigeria, with its conflicting ethnic and regional loyalties. Unfortunately, these high-profile views turned out to be wrong.

In the night of January 14, 1966, there was, in fact, a military coup. Nigerians woke up on the morning of January 15 to realise that in the course of the night, a military coup had taken place and some of the country's political leaders had been killed during the coup. The coup had been executed by a group of army officers and their men under the leadership of Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, who became the principal spokesman for the

coup makers. In their statements after the coup, they claimed to have acted in the best interest of the country and that they had 'seized power to stamp out tribalism, nepotism and regionalism....' At the time of the coup in January 1966, Nigeria was politically and administratively divided into four regions: West, East, North, and Mid-West, with Lagos as the Federal Government's base. The coup was organised around these five centres of government. As it turned out, the operations in the North were the only ones that seemed to have achieved the coup-planners expectations. In the other centres, the coup either failed or was only partially successful. The result was that Nzeogwu and his team were unable to achieve their objective of taking over the country's entire government machinery. When Major Nzeogwu who had taken control in the North later learnt about the failure of the coup in Lagos and in other parts of the country, he was very disappointed and threatened to invade the South.

Later, Nzeogwu gave the conditions under which he and his colleagues would be ready to surrender their troops and the areas under their control to General Ironsi's Federal forces in Lagos. The first condition was a guarantee for the safety of Nzeogwu as well as the troops that had taken part in the coup, and the second was an assurance that the aim of the revolution would be upheld by the Lagos regime under General Ironsi. Following Ironsi's acceptance of these conditions, Nzeogwu handed over power in the areas under his control to Ironsi. Contrary to the conditions stipulated above, Nzeogwu was later arrested and detained along with his fellow coup plotters when they arrived in Lagos. With the hand-over of power by Nzeogwu and his group, Ironsi became the overall military leader of the country. That

marked the beginning of military rule in Nigeria. Since then, the nation has witnessed almost ten military coups resulting in about a total of 30 years of military rule from 1966 to May 1999 when a democratically-elected civilian government under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo, a retired army general and former military Head of State, assumed office.

The first military intervention in January 1966 also marked the end of the First Republic and the commencement of the process of politicisation of the military. It is historically important to note that at each military coup, the military coup-makers always justified their overthrow of the previous regime by claiming that they had seized power to clean up the society, to wipe out corruption, and to eliminate real or imagined wrongdoings. However, they hardly ever proved that the succeeding military governments were generally better than the ones they overthrew. Many Nigerians believed that every subsequent military coup tended to worsen the plight and living conditions of the ordinary citizens.

Nigeria and Three Decades of Military Rule

At the end of military rule in 1999, many Nigerians publicly declared that on balance, thirty years of military rule had not achieved the great Nigeria of their dreams at independence. On the contrary, they maintained that the country would have been more stable politically if it had been spared the thirty years of military government. Those who take this position rest their case on the fact that the military is not trained or constitutionally expected to govern, but to protect the nation against external aggression. They also maintain that the worst

democratically elected government is better than the best military government, mainly because the democratically elected government can easily be removed at the next elections, while it would require yet another military coup, which could be quite bloody, to remove a military government.

Whatever the merits of these arguments, we must admit that some of the military governments, despite the unconstitutional origin of their sources of power, made some positive contributions to the evolution of the Nigerian nation state. Some created a few major economic and political institutions which served the interest of the nation creditably. For example, in the area of insurance and financial services industry, it was a military government that created such vital institutions as the Nigeria Reinsurance Corporation, the National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria, the Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Company and several other financial institutions that played and continue to play useful roles in the social and economic development of the country. Nothing in this statement is meant to make a case in favour of the concept of military governments since such governments are by their very nature abnormal, which makes them unacceptable as a satisfactory system of government for developing societies.

In any event, if we take stock as we reflect on the Nigerian society that the military inherited in 1966, we will probably arrive at the conclusion that Nigeria's value system, including the social, political and economic values, suffered tremendous decline from 1966 to 1999. Most Nigerians at home and abroad tend to blame the military leadership for the virtual collapse of our value system during these years. Some insist, with justification, that

the responsibility must be shared by the entire leadership elite for various reasons. In any event, our objectives is to ascertain where we went wrong in the past and in the process indicate the lessons we could draw from such mistakes to assist us in our search for a better tomorrow. This is the context in which we are examining the state of the nation inherited by the military in 1966 and the lessons we could learn from that.

The Pre-1966 Nigeria Inherited by the Military

Despite the initial enthusiasm displayed by some when the military first intervened in the country's politics and governance, it was evident that most Nigerians clearly recognised the country's national heroes as the founding fathers of modern Nigeria, who fought for independence and later assumed political leadership at federal and regional levels. In spite of their political, ethnic and cultural differences, these early leaders had worked hard to establish and sustain systems, programmes and societal values, designed to guarantee a healthy and economically viable society; which were later allowed to decline and degenerate hopelessly, resulting in a nation and society totally different from the one inherited from the early national heroes.

Although some Nigerians had welcomed the first military intervention in 1966, presumably because they believed the military would perform miracles by eliminating the teething political problems of that period (which now appears insignificant when compared to subsequent experiences in later years), by 1998, most Nigerians were yearning for an end to military rule and a return to democratic governance. It had dawned on

Nigerians that the country had inherited a society of relatively better, healthier and disciplined human beings from the post-independence political leaders like Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dr. M. I. Okpara, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, to name just a few. It was now generally agreed that during their time, the country had had highly committed and relatively selfless leaders as well as a disciplined, stable society and governments that reflected the peoples' aspirations.

The Nigerian State Inherited from the Leadership of the First Republic

We summarise hereunder some positive features of the Nigerian state inherited from the First Republic:

- i. Greater security of human lives and property and a very low rate of such violent crimes as armed robbery that later became quite common in the 1980s and 1990s.
- ii. A low level of poverty and greater commitment on the part of the political leadership to the social and economic well-being of the people.
- iii. A relatively low level of corruption in the sense that corruption was not a major national problem, especially in the public service, as it is today.
- iv. Complete absence of the drug menace and negative practices such as drug trafficking, examination malpractices and cultism amongst students, with all their deadly consequences. No

one heard about students killing their colleagues until as recently as the early 1980s.

- v. There was a high level of religious tolerance, freedom of worship and an absence of state involvement in religious matters. In this regards, leaders like Sir Ahmadu Bello, Dr. M. I. Okpara and Chief Obafemi Awolowo set very positive examples in their home regions by their individual actions and examples. They recognised the dangers associated with religious intolerance in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society and took positive steps to control and check such dangers by their own individual actions, examples and utterances. Today, the reverse seems to be the case.
- vi. There was greater commitment to education and character development at all levels of society. As a result, the quality of education was much higher and people were generally better behaved and more caring than is the case today.
- vii. The tragic feature of our present society which takes the form of excessive materialism, greed and money-worship were very uncommon under these early leaders. This is one of the most destructive features of the present Nigerian society. In the days of the early national heroes, the Nigerian society was not materialistic and Nigerians did not indulge in any form of money-worship. On the contrary, most citizens had a measure of contempt for money acquired illegally or through dubious means. The leaders in those

early days could not and did not condone the new '419' mentality with all its negative features. No respectable religious body in those days would confer a knighthood, chieftaincy title or any other honour on a rich man whose sources of wealth could be remotely described as ill-gotten. With the invasion of the country's leadership by delinquents, the reverse is now the case.

- viii. The quality of leadership was much better. At all levels of society, only the best aspired to leadership positions. Today, leadership is even purchased. The massive rigging of elections that seem to be the order of the day did not exist in those days, at least not at the present alarming scale. Leaders were selfless and committed and in most cases, they were motivated by a genuine desire to render selfless service to their people. This explains why it was possible to design the various agricultural programmes which actually fed the people and significantly reduced or eliminated the kind of abject poverty that exists in most Nigerian societies today.
- ix. It was a much more humane society in all parts of the country. There was less repression and fewer cases of human rights abuse; thus there was a more stable, peaceful and happier society. Although the ethnic factor has always been a major feature of the social, political and economic lives of African nations, Nigeria included, ethnicity was not such an overriding negative factor as it later became in the Nigerian

environment of the 1980s, 1990s and beyond. It is possible that the relatively decentralised system of government under the regional arrangement, as well as the level of maturity and tolerance of the leadership of the First Republic contributed to the reduced level of ethnic conflict and the total absence of religious conflicts. There was a much higher level of accountability on the part of governments, the leadership elite and public service officials. Salaries and wages were paid on the traditional 'pay days' as it was inconceivable that a civil servant or worker would not be paid for two months or more as is common these days.

- x. Better management of resources; the nation's resources were generally better managed than is the case today. Governments at the federal and regional levels had stable economic policies. The nation practised a high level of maintenance culture resulting in limited national waste. It was a remarkable era of healthy competition between the federating units, and this worked well in the overall national interest.
- xi. The concept of unity in diversity was conceived during that period. At the national level, there was a good measure of unity in diversity, despite the fact that each area retained its traditional cultural features. The political leaders seemed committed to preserving the unity and equality of the federating units, thus they did their best to retain all the basic features of true federalism

without any over-centralisation of power. As a result, the 'powerful' Sir Ahmadu Bello, Dr. M. I. Okpara and Chief Obafemi Awolowo preferred to function from their respective regional strongholds rather than at the centre. One of the greatest threats to the Nigerian federalism today is the suppression of the basic concepts of true federalism.

Having highlighted the positive features of the Nigerian state inherited from the leadership of the First Republic to assist us in answering the question as to where we went wrong, we should appreciate that it was not altogether a smooth sail during the First Republic. For a start, we should admit that it was most unfortunate that these positive achievements were blurred by the tragic political and ethnic rivalries that took place towards the end of 1965, which finally resulted in the first unfortunate military intervention that set in motion a chain of events leading to other coups and a destructive civil war.

Undoubtedly, the culture of violence and violent crimes and the increasing number of violent ethnic and religious clashes which did not exist, at least not on a most worrisome scale, before and immediately after independence, coupled with the prevailing low value attached to human lives, are all by-products of violent military coups, the public execution of armed robbers, and the devastating tortures and killings of innocent people during the tragic civil war. Nigeria would certainly have been a more humane society if its national psyche had been spared all this violence. Any positive efforts directed at repairing this national damage and injury, and any

concerted effort aimed at restoring the dignity and self-respect of the human being in the Nigerian society would surely be welcomed as positive steps in the right direction. This is a challenge that deserves the attention of our governments and the nation's entire leadership elite.

In subsequent chapters when we examine the state of the nation as the country returned to democratic governance in 1999 and beyond, we will have the opportunity to assess the new democratic culture and the continued effects of the invasion of the country's leadership by delinquents.



CHAPTER 4



CIVIL WAR AND THE TASK OF RECONCILIATION, REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

The Nigerian Civil War started on July 6, 1967 and ended officially on January 15, 1970. It is beyond the scope of this book to embark on a detailed discussion of this tragic Civil War. This has been done by other writers including some of the principal actors. Our concern here is to highlight the effects of the Civil War in the context of our present theme; its impact on the development of the nation, and the role of the leadership elite in the entire exercise. In the process, we hope to identify some useful lessons to guide our future actions in our search for a stable nation.

As in most cases of this nature, the duration as well as the devastating effect of the Civil War was grossly under-

rated by the combatants on both sides. When the war started on July 6, 1967, the general belief was that it would not last more than a few days. Gowon had described it as a 'police action' that would soon be over without much damage. As it turned out, the war was much more than a police action. It was one of the worst civil wars in recent human history and one of the most expensive in terms of financial and human waste. It lasted for two years and seven months. Despite all the destruction and waste, it achieved nothing that could not have been achieved through dialogue, discussion, negotiation and agreement, all pursued in a spirit of compromise. It is generally believed that at least one million men, women and children died as a direct and indirect result of the war from shells, bombs, gun shots and from malnutrition and kwashiorkor.

Throughout most of the period of the war, the Federal forces had the upper hand, although the Biafran troops fought gallantly at some of the war fronts. They offered enough resistance to delay the 'crushing of the rebellion' for almost three years. As the only legally recognized authority, the Federal Government had a lot of political and military advantages in the conflict. It enjoyed international recognition and support and therefore had no difficulty in obtaining the necessary weapons to prosecute the war. Despite their handicaps, the Biafrans offered stiff resistance in some of the battles. In fact, at the early stages of the war, Biafran forces scored several successes, although, from all accounts, it was only once that they had a chance of victory. This was in August 1967, about a month after the war began, when a battalion of about 1,000 Biafran soldiers and seven officers travelling in lorries, vans, assorted cars and motorcycles successfully invaded

the Mid-West. They took Agbor, Benin and Ore and were advancing towards Lagos and Ibadan when the military expedition came to an abrupt end. Several writers and commentators on the Civil War maintain that the military situation on the Federal side was so weak at the time that if the advancing Biafrans had continued the push, they would have captured Lagos and altered the course of the war. Perhaps looking at the situation now, with the advantage of hindsight, and since most right-thinking Nigerians believe that the best arrangement for Nigeria is one united country in which social justice and fair play would prevail, perhaps it was Providence that terminated the advance in the dramatic way in which it happened. After this expedition, the war situation changed in favour of the Federal forces, mainly as a result of the disparity in the supplies and other human and material resources between the Biafran and Federal forces. The Biafrans had no food, very little drugs and above all, very limited weapons and other military hardware, whilst the federalists had access to most of these. Whilst the Biafran soldier fought with ancient rifles and shot guns, his federal counterpart was dressed in full military outfit, equipped with modern machine guns and well supplied with food and drugs.

By the middle of 1968, it was evident that Biafra could not win the war in a military sense, but the struggle nevertheless continued. In spite of their suffering and the death of many of their people, the secessionists continued to fight with unusual determination, courage and a kind of self-sacrifice which had never been experienced in any African country. Isolated from the rest of the world, they had to produce practically everything they needed for

survival. Scientists produced weapons, bombs and the *Ogbunigwe*. Others produced and refined petrol, engine oil and other lubricants, and some motor spare parts. Gin and other beverages were produced for home consumption. Engineers and other workers designed and built make-shift airports in less than two weeks.

Unsuccessful Negotiations to End the Civil War, 1968-1969

In the course of 1968, many friends of Nigeria in Africa, Europe and other parts of the world attempted unsuccessfully to resolve the Nigerian crisis and to end the Civil War. Some of the institutions that joined in the search for peace included the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Organisation of African Unity. By October 1969, it was evident that the days of Biafran resistance were numbered. The Federal forces were now equipped and ready for the final push for the victory that had eluded them for well over two years. By the end of November 1969, it did not require a military genius to know that the Biafran regime would soon come to an end. A final attempt to achieve peace through negotiations was lost in December 1969 when a peace conference scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in the middle of December had to be abandoned. Each side in the conflict blamed the other for the failure of this crucial peace conference, and different accounts have been given as to why the vital talks did not take place. John Hatch described the situation thus:

Towards the end of 1969, the Federal forces brought some co-ordination into their command and had accumulated sufficient firepower to give them a

definite expectation of victory. It is therefore significant at this juncture that General Gowon once again showed his sincere desire to end the rebellion without so antagonizing his opponents such that their reintegration into the Federation would be impossible. He did not aim to secure a complete military victory; he believed that this might well entail bitter fighting through the Ibo land forests, probably followed by years of guerilla warfare. Gowon's objective was to bring sufficient military pressure on Ojukwu to persuade him that he could not win the war and that his best choice was to negotiate for peace. If Ojukwu could not be persuaded, Gowon hoped that other Ibo leaders would recognize the reality and overthrow Ojukwu in order to negotiate. Peace talks were actually scheduled for mid-December, with Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone acting as the honest broker. At the last moment, however, the talks were postponed..."

Also commenting on the failure of this last peace conference, Fola Oyewole in his book, *The Reluctant Rebel*, blamed Ojukwu for the failure of the peace move 'brilliantly initiated' by Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. According to Oyewole, any lingering hope of a peaceful settlement of the impasse by negotiation faded finally in December 1969 following Ojukwu's broadcast on the eve of the peace meeting which had embarrassed the Emperor. Selassie had hoped that the best thing was to get the two sides to the conference table at all cost and that if they started talking, they could find a meeting point which would lead to a compromise settlement. Such a settlement 'might not have guaranteed an independent sovereign Republic of Biafra, but the Ibos, who were the inhabitants

of the remnant of Biafra, would have wound-up with better terms than was the case at the end of the hostilities...'

Reflecting on these and similar accounts, some leading Nigerians have asked – Is this another example of a letdown of the people by the leadership?

In any event, many Nigerians on both sides of the war and their foreign friends who had hoped that the war would end at the conference table, even at this late hour, were naturally disappointed when the December 1969 peace move ended without even taking off. From all accounts, the position at that time was that the Federal Field commanders in their various war fronts had virtually stopped fighting and were waiting for the outcome of the December peace move before launching their final military offensive to end the war, in case the talks failed to achieve a negotiated peace. When it became clear that this peace initiative had failed, the Federal forces launched a determined attack on what was left of the Biafra territory, and met with very little resistance from the Biafran forces.

Christmas of 1969 was a bad one in the war affected areas, especially in the territories still held by Biafran forces. Instead of peace and good tidings, there was the worst civil war in Africa; instead of good food, merriment and Christmas carols, people had to contend with the sounds of war – the shelling, the constant air raids, sounds of machine guns and other automatic weapons as well as hunger, starvation and kwashiorkor. Soon after Christmas, everyone in and around the war affected areas knew that the war was now at its final stages and would end in a matter of days, or at best, weeks. The concern of most right-thinking persons was how to reduce the confusion and possible deaths at the end of the actual military action.

The Civil War Ends

On the night of January 10, 1970, Ojukwu and some members of his family and close associates left Biafra for Ivory Coast after handing over to General Philip Effiong of the Biafran Army. General Effiong was a Lieutenant Colonel when he left the Nigerian Army for Biafra at the beginning of the crisis. Two days later, on January 12, 1970, Effiong made a historic broadcast announcing the surrender of Biafra. In this broadcast, he stated in part as follows:

... a stop must be put to the bloodshed and the suffering of the people. Our people are now disillusioned; those elements of the old regime who have made negotiation and reconciliation impossible have voluntarily removed themselves from our midst.

He declared that he had ordered 'an orderly disengagement of troops, and announced that a delegation was ready to meet representatives of the Federal Government 'anywhere to negotiate a peace settlement on the basis of the OAU resolutions.'

In a broadcast on Radio Nigeria the following night, Gowon welcomed the surrender and declared that 'we have arrived at the end of a tragic and painful conflict.' He also announced a general amnesty for those who were misled into supporting the attempt at secession. When Effiong and his colleagues arrived in Lagos on January 15 to formally hand over the instrument of surrender, they were warmly received by Gowon, who later declared that there was 'no victor and no vanquished' in the Nigerian Civil War. With the Civil War over, the next major task which the Gowon Administration faced and tackled was the

challenge of rebuilding the nation. This challenge was captured in three words – reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The Task of Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction

The task of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction embarked upon at the end of the Civil War, however imperfect, must be recorded as one of the major decisions of the Gowon Administration at the end of the war. When Ojukwu took off to Ivory Coast a few days before the end of the war, many Nigerians and some foreigners, including some of his admirers were disappointed. They were disappointed because they saw Ojukwu's actions as a display of cowardice. Most of these people had no personal knowledge of the damage and human suffering that was taking place in the war affected areas as their knowledge of the war had been acquired from television screens in the comfort of their homes and from newspapers and radio.

For the actual victims of the war, their most important wish at that stage was to see an end to hostilities and their suffering. If peace could be achieved by Ojukwu's departure, the disposition was to let him go so as to pave the way for other Biafran leaders to achieve some kind of negotiated settlement and to alleviate or terminate the suffering of the victims of war. Thus, the interpretation of Ojukwu's departure from Biafra notwithstanding, the circumstances of his departure viewed in retrospect was one of the best things that happened to Nigeria in the context of the Civil War. If Ojukwu had remained and fought to the end, it would have been more difficult to end

the war. If he had been killed in the process, he would have ended up a martyr, thereby making the reconciliation process difficult and the war would have been prolonged unnecessarily. Perhaps, it is a blessing in disguise that Ojukwu left the way he did.

By any standard, the task of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction after any Civil War is a major assignment for any administration. Considering the highly destructive and disruptive nature of the Nigerian Civil War, this task was a massive one which the Gowon administration had to contend with. As stated in an earlier publication, the Nigerian authorities at the end of this bitter and destructive civil war had three major problems to cope with, namely, the problems of Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction. Whilst it may not be accurate to claim that these difficult tasks were executed by the Gowon administration with an outstanding degree of perfection at all levels, it must be stated that to everyone's surprise, including some erstwhile Biafran supporters, the transition from war to peace was relatively smooth and efficient. This important historical fact lends some validity to the view that the average Nigerian is generally peace loving and that on his own, without any form of political, religious or ethnic incitement, could live in harmony with his neighbours and could achieve a good measure of reconciliation with his erstwhile foe once he is left to sort out his problems in the traditional African spirit of give and take.

It is noteworthy that at least one foreign commentator on the Nigerian Civil War endorsed the fact that Nigerians and indeed most other Africans are good at making peace after the kind of destruction and bitterness associated with

the Nigerian civil war. In his comments on the subject of peace and reconciliation after the Nigerian civil war, John de St. Jorre stated as follows:

When one considers the brutality, the proscriptions, the carefully maintained immensely durable hatred that have so often followed wars in the "civilized" West..... it may be that when history takes a longer view of Nigeria's, it will be shown that while the black man has little to teach us about making war, he has a real contribution to offer in making peace.

Undoubtedly, if we stop and reflect seriously on the extensive damage, anger and anguish associated with the Nigerian civil war, we can well understand the amazement of many foreign observers at the speed at which the tasks of rehabilitation and reconstruction were tackled. The result was overwhelming. Within a relatively short time, so much was achieved in the direction of rehabilitation and reconstruction. The credit must go to Nigerians on both sides. The Ibos on the Biafran side, after the civil war promptly accepted the realities of the situation as they saw it. They did not indulge in self pity or in acts of sabotage, instead they faced squarely the task of rebuilding and repairing their individual affairs which had been damaged or destroyed during the war, mostly without the help of government. This they did with difficulty since most of them had lost practically all their worldly possessions including money in the banks since Biafran currency and bank accounts "contaminated" by the Biafran money deposits or withdrawals, were declared illegal by the Federal Government at the end of hostilities. The Federal Government on its part showed some degree of

understanding and magnanimity towards the former secessionists in its policy on reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. This helped to speed up the achievement of the desired national objectives, although some misguided officials at various times tried to frustrate or delay the achievement of these worthy objectives.

As a result of the positive attitude of Nigerians on both sides, by the end of 1975, most ordinary Nigerians had virtually forgotten about the war. The only Nigerians who are not likely to forget the war are those who were direct victims of the war, such as those who lost all their possessions and their livelihood, their parents and breadwinners and the young men and young women who lost their arms, legs and sight during the war. Those war victims will never forget the war for the rest of their lives. Their presence amongst us will remind us of the utter futility of wars and the value of peace. We sincerely hope that this is the last civil war that Nigeria will ever witness as a nation. Those who preach division and hatred instead of love and peace amongst the various ethnic groups that make up this country should be reminded of the cost of this civil war to Nigeria both in terms of human and material which by 1970 estimates could have build 12 specialist hospitals, 19 modern towns in addition to transforming all the country's universities and other major infrastructural facilities nation-wide.

Lessons of the Civil War

As we reflect on our journey as a nation during the celebration of our centenary, we should also reflect on the lessons that we have learnt from this tragic civil war. The first lesson is that any kind of war is an evil wind that does

not do any good to anyone. There is no alternative sensible solution to conflict other than resolution through dialogue and discussion, followed by agreement and settlement, even if it is a compromise settlement which would naturally not satisfy all the demands of either side.

The second lesson is that no nation state can exist in peace if sections of its population are made to feel insecure, rejected and unprotected by their government. In such a situation, the ethnic, religious or geographical group which feels that it has been rejected may either run away from the nation state or seek protection elsewhere or may take shelter in one part of the nation state and gang up together to protect themselves; or they may be tempted to adopt the dangerous and disastrous step of breaking away from their nation state to set up a state of their own. We pray that such a situation will never arise in Nigeria in future. This is one more argument in support of national political parties instead of political parties that are ethnic oriented.

The third lesson is that we must never allow our national, ethnic or religious conflicts to remain unresolved for too long. At the earliest opportunity, our governments, the leaders and traditional institutions should be mobilized to resolve all serious conflicts that threaten the nation's peace and stability before such situations get out of hand.

The fourth lesson is that we should endeavour to resolve our national problems on our own without much reliance on the dictates of foreign interests. From all accounts, foreign interests in Nigeria's oil resources played a crucial role in the escalation of the crisis that led to the civil war. Perhaps if Nigeria were not an oil producing state, foreigners would have left Nigerians alone to solve their national problems. There is no doubt that oil ensured the

external intervention in the Nigerian conflict, and external influence helped to aggravate our problems. Maybe without foreign involvement on both sides, there would have been no civil war and many lives would have been saved. Even after the war had started, foreign intervention led to its escalation and therefore prolonged the war unnecessarily. From all accounts, foreigners fought on both sides; some were even alleged to have acted for both sides at different times, depending on which side was prepared to pay more money. Russian war planes and British equipment were available to the Federal side to help fuel the war and the half-hearted French involvement on the Biafran side also helped to aggravate the situation without producing any solution.

The Nigerian civil war was brutal and devastating. Many innocent Nigerian men, women and children were sacrificed in the war fronts and many more died from the side-effects of the war. It was a great price that Nigerians had to pay for national unity. This unity has to be preserved in the best interest of all Nigerians irrespective of their ethnic or religious affiliations. To this end, we must build a modern African nation founded on justice and fair-play with genuine democratic institutions that place the people above all other considerations. The kind of nation that would be a source of pride to all its citizens so that every citizen would be anxious and ready to make the supreme sacrifice for the preservation of the security and integrity of the nation against any form of external aggression because of the peace, security, protection, justice and opportunities that his country offers to him and his family.

After the end of the civil war in January 1970, the military remained in power until the brief return of a

democratically elected civilian administration led by President Shehu Shagari in 1979. The Shagari administration was later removed by yet another military coup in 1983 in circumstances that will be explained in the next chapter.



CHAPTER 5



BRIEF RETURN TO DEMOCRACY AND SHAGARI'S SECOND REPUBLIC CHALLENGES 1979 – 1983

The first military era that started in January 1966 came to an end in 1979 with the return to democratic governance. After being in power for thirteen years, the military decided to return political power and governance to a democratically elected civilian administration. They organized elections and at the conclusion of the elections and the usual problems of irregularities, accusations and counter-accusations associated with elections in Nigeria, the Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo and his military government handed over the country's leadership to the ultimate winner of the elections. Alhaji Shehu Shagari thus assumed office as President of the Second Republic and Nigeria's first Executive President along with

his deputy, Dr. Alex Ifeanyichukwu Ekwueme, who was sworn in as Vice-President.

The Government of President Shehu Shagari, 1979 – 1983

President Shehu Shagari and Vice President Alex Ekwueme were sworn in on October 1, 1979 as leaders of the first democratically elected civilian government after thirteen years of military rule.

History will remember Alhaji Shehu Shagari as Nigeria's first Executive President. Historians will endeavor to answer the question as to the sort of person he was and the role he played in the country's political history. From all accounts, Nigerians were generally delighted to welcome him as the Head of the first democratically elected civilian government in Nigeria after several years of military rule.

Most Nigerians openly acknowledged the positively unifying effects of Shagari's humane, gentle but dynamic personality which was seen as a blessing in the context of the upheavals and turbulence of Nigeria's recent history of military coups and violent changes of governments. Those who knew Shagari well were unanimous in their view that he was eminently qualified for the office as a result of the long training he had received whilst serving in different government capacities for many years. His personal honesty and integrity was never in doubt. It is reported that he did not actually seek or desire his party's nomination for the office of President but was pressured to accept the nomination as a compromise candidate to save the party from the confusion that had arisen when several party heavy-weights were angling for the party's

nomination. The party had turned to him when it became clear that he was obviously unambitious and was therefore least likely to excite acrimony. In any event, before his election as President, he had been quite active in Nigerian politics, having served almost every government since independence either as a minister or commissioner.

Shagari's stable, respectable and unifying personality was also relevant and useful for other reasons. In a multi-ethnic society like ours in which tribalism and ethnicity still determine the individual's reactions to issues and to others, it is not easy to find a leader who will be totally accepted by the whole country. At the time of President Shagari's inauguration, there was abundant evidence to the effect that many Nigerians of different ethnic groups were convinced that the President had the experience and personality that would ensure peace and stability in Nigeria as well as the ability to promote the survival of democracy and the rule of law, after thirteen years of military rule.

Unfortunately, Nigeria's turbulent and corruption-ridden politics always tends to mess up the reputation of good men either as a result of their own political errors of judgment or as the indirect consequence of the corruption and incompetence of their ministers, officials and other political colleagues or associates. These factors, along with other peculiarly Nigerian social, political and economic considerations, combined to give the military the excuse or justification to terminate the Second Republic by removing Shagari's democratically elected civilian government after a brief period of four years.

It might be historically useful to mention at this point that the period immediately before and up to the end of

the Second Republic marked the beginning of what has been described as the era when the political environment had become a dangerous jungle that must be avoided by decent men and women who value their good name and reputation. In support of their position, the proponents of this view argue that Shagari and Ekwueme were gentlemen known for their integrity and decency, who were later tainted by the untidy political system and environment in which they found themselves.

Commenting on the effect of this brand of partisan politics on the image and reputation of honest and decent individuals, Chief S.L. Edu, a highly respected elder statesman and industrialist from Epe in Lagos State, in a spirited conversation we had in 1998, told me, most emphatically, that no decent and honest man ever gets actively involved in our brand of partisan politics and emerges from it with his image and reputation intact. He agreed that Shagari and his deputy Ekwueme and a few of their colleagues were decent men whose reputation was dented as a result of this Nigerian political phenomenon. In response to my question as to what we should do to make our politics attractive to modest, decent and honest individuals who genuinely desire to get involved in partisan politics to help make our society better, the distinguished elder statesman responded by saying that at present, the political arena is like a huge jungle inhabited by dangerous wild animals of assorted descriptions who live on the principle of the survival of the fittest; that as long as this remains the situation, any decent person who ventures into the jungle is doing so at his own peril. He concluded by saying that our politics will become safe and attractive to good men and women only if we succeed in cleaning up

the arena by making partisan politics attractive only to those who want to give selfless service to the people, rather than an avenue for unjust enrichment. In effect, the elder statesman suggested that the cleaning up process would start from making our politics unattractive to the delinquents who have invaded the country's leadership over the years. This factor deserves serious attention as we embark on our transformation and reformation efforts.

1979 Second Republic Constitution Departure from Earlier Constitutions

Another important point that deserves some mention at this point is that the 1979 Second Republic Constitution under which Shagari and his deputy Ekwueme were elected and sworn in, was a complete departure from the country's earlier constitutions. At independence, constitution provided for the Westminster type of Parliamentary democracy. The 1979 Constitution was more like the American Presidential system in the sense that it made the President the Head of State, the Chief Executive of the Federation and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. Under the same constitution, the governor of a State exercises powers and functions in the State similar to those exercised by the President at the Federal level. The counterpart of the Vice President in the State is the Deputy Governor.

Many discerning and well meaning Nigerians who criticize the Presidential System of governance in the context of Nigeria today do so on several grounds. They maintain that the system is too expensive to operate in a developing country like ours and above all, that the system is prone to corruption, especially as it confers so much

power on a few individuals. They also question why we found it necessary to abandon the parliamentary system which seemed to have worked well for us since independence until the intervention of the military in the country's politics and governance in 1966. It is probably understandable that in view of the nature of military discipline and its peculiar command system, the presidential system would naturally work better under a military government. We can therefore understand well why the first military government under General Ironsi found it necessary to introduce a centralized unitary system under its Decree No 34 of 1966 which continued to be embraced by other military administrations thereafter. Now that we have returned to democratic civilian governance, it is hoped that we will consider settling for a simpler and less expensive system of governance in our overall national interest, so as to have more revenue for development.

Some Factors that Contributed to the Return of the Military and the Termination of the Second Republic in 1983

Throughout the many years of Nigeria's turbulent political history and the many military coups, the usual reasons for take-over given by the coup leaders include such factors as corruption, abuse of office, bad governance, election rigging, and assorted fraudulent practices and similar reasons. Most of these reasons were mentioned by the military as justification for their intervention in removing Shagari's government, thereby terminating the Second Republic. For the records, we must state that apart from these usual reasons advanced by the military for its

intervention in this context, there were some other negative factors that contributed to the adverse social and economic environment that encouraged the military to intervene and remove Shagari's government.

Although the Nigerian economy had started to decline before the Shagari administration assumed office in 1979, the economic situation worsened quite early in the life of the Shagari administration, thereby creating very difficult social and economic conditions for the administration. In 1981, for example, the prevailing world recession led to a drastic fall in the price of oil and other commodities. As a result, the government's oil revenue fell from US\$25 billion in 1980 to US\$5 billion. Since oil is the main source of government's revenue, this naturally affected all the government's financial commitments. Salaries were either not paid on time or were frozen, new construction projects were curtailed, construction of the new capital at Abuja slowed down considerably, imports of non-essentials were banned and there was soaring inflation, mass unemployment and widespread corruption.

In spite of all these problems, the 1983 elections were held and the NPN, Shagari's party, won the elections for Shagari's second term. Despite Shagari's re-election, the economy did not improve and social and economic development remained as described above. This was the existing situation when the military intervened, once again, by removing the elected civilian government. On December 31, 1983, Shagari was deposed in a bloodless coup and Nigeria had another military government led by General Mohammadu Buhari.

Some Notable Highlights of the Second Republic

As stated above, after thirteen years of military rule, October 1, 1979 witnessed the return to democratic governance in Nigeria. Alhaji Shehu Shagari, who contested the 1979 presidential elections on the platform of the National Party of Nigeria, emerged victorious in a keenly contested election. The majority of the Nigerian masses had very high expectations that a new civilian administration would improve the lives of the people especially as the 1979 Constitution had promised that this was a constitution that would ensure the active participation of the people under a democratic system. Interestingly, the political parties during the Second Republic did not seem to differ in any way from those of the First Republic, as they maintained their ethnic colouration. All they did was to adopt new names but they were essentially the same. For example, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) inherited most of the philosophy of the Northern People's Congress, although it differed from the NPC in that it obtained significant support from some non-Igbo states of south-eastern Nigeria. The Nigerian People's Party (NPP), the successor to the NCNC, was largely Igbo and had Azikiwe as its leader. An effort to form a coalition with non-Hausa-Fulani northern elements collapsed in the end, and the botched alliance gave birth to a breakaway party with strong support in parts of the north. The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), which drew support from mainly Yoruba states, was the successor to the Action Group, with Awolowo as its leader.

The legislature reflected the multiplicity of the political parties at the polls in the Second Republic. The NPN garnered 36 senatorial seats, 165 in the House of

Representatives; following closely was the UPN with 28 seats in the senate and 111 House of Representatives positions; the NPP got 16 senatorial seats and 78 seats in the House of Representatives. The Great Nigerian people's Party (GNPP) secured eight seats in the senate and 43 House of Representatives seats. Trailing behind was the People's Redemption Party (PRP) with seven seats in the senate and 49 in the House of Representatives. As a result of the lack of a clear-cut majority in both legislative houses, a coalition between the NPN and the NPP was initiated. The coalition however experienced difficulties as the interests of the two parties were often in conflict, which forced the NPN to operate alone in most cases. The UPN became the opposition party as was the case during the First Republic and Chief Awolowo continued as leader and spokesman of the opposition.

The Second Republic took off during the oil boom of the late 1970s, but soon suffered the consequences of a global economic recession. Shagari made housing, industries, transportation and agriculture the focal points of his administration. He expended hundreds of millions of dollars on the Delta and Ajaokuta Steel complexes and on several steel rolling mills in the country.

In area of agriculture, the Green Revolution was launched to redeem the sector from dormancy and to encourage local farmers in the hope that Nigeria would become agriculturally self-sufficient. To bring this noble plan to reality, several river basin authorities and rural development schemes were established.

Various housing schemes were undertaken in different parts of the country. The education sector was not left out in the development strides of the Second Republic. Two

Federal Government Colleges were established in Abuja in 1983, while three Federal Polytechnics were established in Afikpo, Nasarawa and Kaura-Namoda.

In spite of these milestone developments, corruption threatened the newly found democracy. There were major scandals that involved the Federal housing Scheme, the National Youth Service Corps, the Nigerian External Telecommunications, the Federal Mortgage Bank, the Federal Capital Territory Administration, the Central Bank of Nigeria, and the Nigerian National Supply Company. Added to these were the half-hearted attempts to license imports and to control inflation, which led to smuggling. Smuggling later became a major crime that went on almost unimpeded.

The recession that began due to the fall in prices of oil after the middle of 1981, inflicted severe strain on the Second Republic. In an attempt to score cheap political points, government spending kept increasing, and the friction among the political parties and between the federal government and the states only reinforced financial recklessness. Nigeria's foreign debt leaped from N3.3 billion in 1978 to N14.7 billion in 1982. The combined debt of N13.3 billion by the nineteen state governments was already hanging on the necks of the states as at 1983. As elections approached in August 1983, the economic downturn that reflected in low oil prices, widespread corruption coupled with rising government spending hit record levels and signaled to many that the Second Republic was in poor shape.

The second elections during the Second Republic were to be its last. When the results were tallied in 1983, it was clear that there had been a manoeuvring by the NPN which

increased its control of states from seven to twelve, including Kano and Kaduna. Shagari was re-elected president, and the NPN gained 61 of the 95 Senate seats and 307 of the 450 House of Representatives seats. Not even the supporters of the NPN had anticipated such results, given the state of the economy and the public outcry over the irregularities that characterized the elections. Three months after Alhaji Shagari was inaugurated for a second four-year term, the military toppled his government on 31st December, 1983 as stated earlier .



CHAPTER 6



RETURN TO MILITARY RULE

Having established a culture of coups and military interventions in the country's politics, it was not long before the military once again intervened to remove an elected civilian government. On December 31, 1983, the democratically elected civilian government, under the leadership of President Shehu Shagari, was removed by a military coup under the leadership of General Muhammadu Buhari.

The demise of the Second Republic in these circumstances started another chain of military coups and changes of military governments which was to last for sixteen years with considerable impact on Nigeria's political stability, her social and economic development, and general well-being. The Buhari Military Regime of 1983 to 1985, was followed by the Ibrahim Babangida Regime from 1985 to 1993. The short-lived Ernest Shonekan-led

Interim National Government was installed by General Babangida's military government after Babangida chose to 'step aside.'

Shonekan's Interim National Government was followed closely by the Sani Abacha Military Regime which was in power from 1993-1998 and was later followed by the Abdulsalami Abubakar Military Regime that assumed power when Abacha died in office in June 1998. The Abubakar Military Government was in power from June 9, 1998 to May 29, 1999.

Highlights of the Buhari, Babangida, Abacha and Abubakar Military Regimes, 1983-1999

As stated earlier, with the fall of the Second Republic as a result of Nigeria's fifth military coup since 1966, another military government under the leadership of General Buhari took over the government of the country from President Shehu Shagari's administration on December 31, 1983. As had now become fashionable, some Nigerians expressed the belief that Buhari was the new national savior who would solve all the country's economic and social problems. With the support of his very visibly serious, tough and unsmiling deputy, General Tunde Idiagbon, they proceeded to address the country's problems. With obvious military dispatch, Nigerians were left in no doubt that the Buhari government was not prepared to tolerate any form of opposition or reckless action from any misguided citizen or group of citizens.

The administration won the admiration of Nigerians as a result of its anti-corruption stance. Not resting on its oars, the Buhari administration instituted the "War

Against Indiscipline” to sanitise the nation and cleanse her of indiscipline and immorality. Consequently, new decrees carrying long prison terms or the death penalty for “miscellaneous offenses” or “economic sabotage,” including examination malpractices, counterfeiting and drug and currency trafficking, were promulgated. However, these were criticised by some Nigerians as being too drastic.

Efforts to bolster the economy were hampered by severe decline in oil revenue and the huge burden of repaying the nation’s rising internal and external debts. Government’s economic recovery measures included a currency change early in 1984, prolonged border closure, wage freeze, cut-back on government spending and other tough actions. The stringent economic measures applied by the government resulted in large-scale loss of jobs by public servants. Students revolted against the re-introduction of fees in tertiary institutions and the removal of feeding subsidy.

Many people accused the Buhari administration of being inhuman and insensitive. To keep the press in check, the Buhari administration promulgated Decree No. 4, which sought to ensure that journalists reported “truthfully” and that public officers were not maligned by the press. However, the decree was widely viewed as a ploy by the government to gag the press.

Although the Buhari government had openly declared its determination to wage a war against corruption in an effort to eliminate it from the nation’s culture, it had just effectively commenced this war against corruption when the government was toppled in another military coup, the sixth, on August 27, 1986. General Ibrahim Babangida emerged as the new military Head of State.

As soon as he assumed power as the new military Head of State after Buhari, General Babangida, an astute military tactician and politician, proceeded to take several actions designed to win public acceptance and support for his administration by correcting some of the perceived errors of the Buhari administration. In the process, the administration gained instant popularity, especially when Babangida released many of the political prisoners, including Nigeria's most popular singer Fela Anikulapo Kuti. One of the public complaints made against the Buhari administration was that they had clamped down on individuals and press freedom. Babangida responded by lifting all forms of press controls and this naturally made him very popular with the media and many Nigerians. For a while, things worked out generally well for the Babangida Administration.

The Babangida regime inherited the country's unfavourable view of military administration. Aware of this, General Babangida immediately repealed Decree No. 4 and freed all detained journalists. He went on to curtail some of the powers and excesses of the security agencies. A time-table to return power to civilians in 1990 was set by the General Babangida regime. With these measures, the Babangida administration endeared itself to the Nigerian public.

The Babangida regime established such agencies as the Mass Mobilisation for Economic Recovery, Self-Reliance and Social Justice (MAMSER), the Constitution Review Committee (CRC) and the National Electoral Commission (NEC) in September 1987 in preparation for the transition programme. When the ban on politics was lifted, nearly forty political parties emerged across the country. The

National Electoral Commission scaled them down to thirteen and recommended same to the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) for registration. Those thirteen were registered, and subsequently disqualified and dissolved by the AFRC. The AFRC went on to establish two new political parties for the country, namely, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC). In the heat of the political activities, an army Major, Gideon Okar, and some other officers attempted a coup d'état, which was swiftly crushed. The political process was restarted with elections for governors and members of the national assembly held.

The Presidential election, intended to finally usher in the Third Republic, was fixed for December 5, 1992. However, Decree No. 53 of 1992 stripped the National Assembly already in place of most of the powers accorded it by the 1989 Constitution, including the power to legislate, or discuss and pass revenue bills. In October 1992, the AFRC nullified the presidential primaries held by the two parties in the previous month on grounds of gross electoral malpractices and banned Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua (rtd) and Chief Olu Falae, both of the SDP, and Mallam Adamu Ciroma and Alhaji Umaru Shinkafi, both of the NRC from participating in future elections. On June 12, 1993, presidential election between Chief M.K.O Abiola of the SDP and Alhaji Bashir Tofa of the NRC was held. Early results showed that Chief Abiola was leading before the military administration restrained NEC from releasing further results.

On the economic side, the Fifth National Development Plan (1986 - 1990), and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) provided alternatives to the path of

taking an IMF loan. SAP aimed at achieving sustained self-reliant growth and to end high budget and balance of payments deficits. It also targeted a reduction in dependence on imports and oil. As a way of engendering private participation in the economy, Decree 25 of 1988 which bordered on privatisation and commercialisation of state-owned enterprises was promulgated. To a large extent, SAP left in its trail the sour taste of mass poverty, misery and general social malaise.

The IBB regime will be remembered for the creation of more states. It also deregulated the ownership of the broadcast media in Nigeria, which set in motion the expansion of the media in the country. However, the annulled June 12 Presidential Election haunted his administration to the end.

By the beginning of the 1990s, the Nigeria situation had gone from bad to worse. The economy was in bad shape, crimes, especially violent crimes and robbery, had increased, the construction industry was collapsing and the country was getting really broke. Corruption had not only increased substantially, but instead of mounting a war against it, which was virtually impossible under the prevailing circumstances, it had almost become institutionalized. A less charismatic leader would have fallen much earlier in the face of these problems, but Babangida's personality, generosity and 'maradonic' traits kept him going until August 27, 1993 when he 'stepped aside' and installed an Interim National Government (ING) with Chief Earnest Shonekan as Chairman.

The Shonekan ING lasted for about 3 months and was removed by the Abacha Regime on November 17, 1993 when General Abacha assumed office as the Head of the New Military Government.

Abacha's time as the Head of State was noted for dictatorship, economic decline, and the abuse of human rights. Abacha started off by dissolving all the elected state and federal legislatures and by sacking the elected governors. He later reconstituted his own democratic rule through the formation of new political parties, the fashioning of a new constitution (1995) and the conduct of elections at various levels. There were indications that he was going to run as the sole candidate in the presidential elections. The creation of six additional states that took the nation's tally from 30 to 36 states was probably one of his greatest legacies.

Due to Abacha's disregard for human rights, Nigeria performed woefully on the international front. The hanging of eight Ogoni activists despite pleas from different quarters across the globe set Nigeria on the path of isolation in the comity of nations. Nigeria was consequently suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations, and other world powers slammed her with different sanctions.

For these reasons, Abacha's sudden death in 1998 brought a great sigh of relief to many Nigerians. His successor, General Abdulsalami Abubakar showed a sincere intent to return the nation to democratic rule. He began by releasing a number of political detainees, including General Olusegun Obasanjo. Chief M.K.O. Abiola died while his release from detention was being negotiated. Abubakar lifted the ban on political activities and this led to the creation of several political parties, including the Peoples Democratic Party, the All Peoples' Party and the Alliance for Democracy. He also set up the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). He

kept his promise on the transition programme and on May 29, 1999, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo became the nation's President.

The June 12 Issue

Chief Moshood Abiola emerged as the flag-bearer of the Social Democratic Party and Alhaji Babagana Kingibe became his running-mate in readiness for the 1993 presidential polls. After the period of electioneering campaigns, it was time for the electorate to decide. On June 12, 1993, elections were held and it was adjudged to have met international standards of transparency. Early results showed that Chief Abiola was clearly in the lead. However, the military administration restrained NEC from releasing further results through an order from a Federal High Court, Abuja; determined to go through the electoral process, the electoral body went to the Kaduna Court of Appeal to have that court order vacated.

In an interview with the press fifteen years after the June 12 annulment, the then NEC Chairman, Professor Humphrey Nwosu insisted that the court had no business stopping them. Through its Director of Legal Services, NEC had challenged the order on the Commission and the court had directed that there should be an accelerated hearing on June 25. Unfortunately, though the hearing was scheduled for June 25, the Commission was dissolved on June 23, 1993.

In a nationwide broadcast, the then Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida, reiterated his administration's commitment to relinquish power on August 27, 1993. He noted that the electoral process had been compromised. The military leader identified the use

of money by aspirants to lure voters during the primaries, which was overlooked in order to keep to the promise of the transition time-table. He expressed concern that the practice had been repeated in the presidential elections, arguing that both presidential candidates would compromise their positions and responsibilities were they to become president.

With the electoral body disbanded, Chief Abiola could only resort to the court of law. In a desperate bid to reclaim his mandate, Chief Abiola on June 11, 1994, declared himself the lawful president of Nigeria in the Epetedo area of Lagos Island. While announcing the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU), Chief Abiola's declaration read in part as follows:

People of Nigeria, exactly one year ago, you turned out in your millions to vote for me, Chief M.K.O Abiola, as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. But politicians in uniform, who call themselves soldiers but are more devious than any civilian would want to be, deprived you of your God-given-right to be ruled by the President you had yourselves elected.

With these opening lines, it was clear that Chief Abiola has pitched himself against the military authorities. After declaring himself president, the military authorities declared him wanted, accusing him of treason. By this time, General Sanni Abacha was the military ruler. Chief Abiola was arrested on the orders of General Sanni Abacha, who dispatched a team of security operatives to bring him into custody. Drawing inspiration from Winnie Mandela, wife of Dr. Nelson Mandela, Alhaja Kudirat Abiola fought

vehemently for the release of her husband and the restoration of her husband's mandate. Her daring activism for the reclamation of her husband's mandate attracted the attention of the military authorities. She was killed on June 4, 1996 in the Oregun area of Ikeja in Lagos.

Civil society groups took to the streets for the restoration of Chief Abiola's mandate. In a typical military fashion, the protests were quickly crushed. Arrests were made while many political activists were forced into exile. Chief Anthony Enahoro and Senator Abraham Adesanya, in alliance with other prominent Nigerians, founded the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), which became the vehicle through which they campaigned for the validation of the June 12, 1993 election.

Chief Frank Kokori, the Secretary-General of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG), led its members on nationwide protests, which literally shut down the entire country. NUPENG refused to lift petroleum products to filling stations across the country.

It was not only the economy that suffered during the June 12 crisis; the education sector was badly affected. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) under the leadership of Prof. Attahiru Jega shut down the nation's university system. University students joined civil society groups to call for the restoration of Abiola's mandate.

Chief Moshood Abiola was detained for four years, largely in solitary confinement. He died on July 7, 1998, a month after General Abacha's demise. His death was saddening and brought to an end a dark era in the nation's history. Importantly, however, his struggle and death became the foundation upon which was established the democratic dispensation that has lasted till this day.



CHAPTER 7



JOURNEY TO DEMOCRATIC REBIRTH

To most Nigerians, especially the vast majority who had been yearning for a return to democratic governance, the greatest achievement of General Abdulsalami Abubakar was the restoration of democracy to the country on May 29, 1999. This action gave Nigeria a new lease of life and earned for General Abubakar and the Nigerian military the respect and admiration of Nigerians and the international community.

Obasanjo's Journey from Prison to Presidency

General Olusegun Obasanjo, a retired General of the Nigerian Army and a former military Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces was elected the first civilian President of Nigeria under the provisions of the 1999 Constitution. He assumed office on May 29, 1999 when the outgoing military Head of State

and Commander-in-Chief, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, handed over power to him at an impressive ceremony, witnessed by many Nigerians and representatives of the international community, in Abuja. A few months before his inauguration as President, General Obasanjo had been languishing in prison where he was serving a 25-year prison sentence imposed on him by the Abacha regime in 1995. In circumstances similar to the case of South Africa's Nelson Mandela, Obasanjo had, in effect, moved from prison to the presidency.

Nigerians, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, are a very religious people with abundant faith in God, Allah or the Supreme Being. As a result, the average Nigerian believes that every major incident in his life or in the life of the nation can only be attributable to God's intervention for one reason or the other. The unusual circumstances of Obasanjo's transition from prison to the presidency, which is not quite common in Nigeria's political history, was seen by most Nigerians, including Obasanjo himself, as a kind of divine intervention and a special act of God.

His return to power was therefore received with high expectations by most Nigerians. By Nigerian standards, his election process was relatively smooth. Nigerians from practically all parts of the country voted massively for him and his party, the People Democratic Party, which became the ruling party. As a matter of fact, of the six geo-political zones in the North and South, the only zone that did not vote for Chief Obasanjo was his own home zone, the South West Zone, which instead of supporting him, had fielded another distinguished Yoruba son, Chief Olu Falae, as a presidential candidate to challenge Chief Obasanjo. But

the latter won decisively because he had the support of most Nigerians from the other five zones. Apart from the element of God's intervention, Chief Obasanjo's success at the polls was easy and smooth due to two critical factors. The first was the support he received from the North and the other zones; the second was the fact that his challenger at the PDP primaries, Dr. Alex Ekwueme, after losing the Party's nomination at the famous Jos Convention, urged his supporters to vote for Chief Obasanjo at the national polls.

Although Nigeria is not South Africa and Obasanjo is not Mandela, many Nigerians and friends of Nigeria from all over the world were confident that President Obasanjo and his administration would transform Nigeria and restore its past glory. Some believed that Obasanjo was the messiah the country had been longing for, to salvage the nation and purge it of all those negative factors that had conspired, for several decades, to delay the nation's march to greatness. Most Nigerians were convinced that their new leader, after his unfortunate trials and tribulations and the almost miraculous circumstances in which he returned to power at the highest national level, would outdo Mandela and other great world leaders in his positive handling of governance and the nation's affairs.

In view of these encouraging developments and expectations, that great day – May 29, 1999 – when Obasanjo was sworn in as President and Commander-in-Chief, was a happy day for most Nigerians; marking the beginning of Nigeria's return to democracy and respectability. It brought with it a general expectation that the new leadership would do everything possible to promote justice and fair play in the management of the

nation's affairs so as to eliminate or critically reduce ethnic tension and other negative elements that had militated against the stability of the nation.

The expectations of the international community and friends of Nigeria from the newly elected Obasanjo's Administration was eloquently stated by the British Foreign Office Minister, Mr. Tony Lloyd in a report published in the *Post Express* of July 17, 1999:

Nigeria's strength lies in her resources and the diversity of her people. Any efforts made by the country's new civilian government to exploit these resources for the benefit of the populace will attract the support of Britain. The government should work for all sections of the population and all parts of the country. Nigeria has experienced high hopes before, all of which were dashed. This time we want things to be different. Ultimately, the only people who can build lasting peace, prosperity and democracy in Nigeria are the Nigerian people themselves. But the UK will be with them every step of the way.

The Anglo-Nigerian relations have been a long and mostly harmonious one. Our recent falling out with Nigeria was not due to any problem we had with the people of Nigeria, but one with the brutal Abacha regime. But that is behind us now, and the UK is leading the way to rebuild the valued partnership we lost during the darkest period for Nigeria. To ensure that Nigeria does not experience such periods again, the Nigerian armed forces needs to assume its proper role under the current Nigerian civil authorities. The military must now become a protector of democracy in Nigeria, not the contrary. The armed forces must

be a professional force answerable to the civilian government at home, and must be able to promote peace, stability and human rights abroad. We are ready to help Obasanjo achieve this, and our programme will concentrate on helping the military to become accountable, transparent and well trained – to help them fulfill the role of a professional military in the democratic society... A democratic Nigerian will carry great weight in Africa and on the world stage... Britain and Nigeria should work together on the key international issues and consult each other as equals...

We should not expect quick or easy success. But it is important that we stay engaged and work towards positive change while protecting our citizens and our commercial interests. There is no contradiction. Supporting positive change – good governance, human rights, and sound economic policies – is important in itself. But success in these areas will also promote our own commercial interests, by boosting prosperity, stability and opportunity. Whilst applauding the current Nigerian government's crusade against corruption, we urge that its prosecution must, however be with enormous courage. As a former Chairman of Transparency International, Obasanjo is fully aware of the importance of this, and is fully committed to applying the principles of transparency, accountability and good governance to the new Nigeria...

These views expressed by the British Minister were in line with the expectations of the international community from the Obasanjo Administration, which started off with tremendous goodwill from both Nigerians and virtually

the whole world. As was stated in my book, *Corporate Responsibility*, published in London by Witherbys shortly after President Obasanjo assumed office in 1999, the main obstacles to effective political leadership and national cohesion in a country like Nigeria, are challenges that the world expects the new political leadership under President Obasanjo to address. These include:

- (a) The urgent need for the political leadership to address the problem of corruption in the country's public services and at all levels of society with a view to eliminating or drastically reducing the level of corruption.
- (b) The problem of ethnic and religious discrimination which must be resolved and removed so as to promote national unity, peace and security.
- (c) The need for democracy, prosperity, unity and lasting peace.
- (d) The need for government to work for and in the best interest of all sections of the country, without discrimination in any form.
- (e) The need for national stability.
- (f) The need for a professional armed force fulfilling its traditional role and protecting democracy and national peace and stability.

National Reconciliation

An equally important challenge identified at the time as one that deserved the urgent attention of the new political leadership, was the issue of national reconciliation of the

various ethnic groups; in order to resolve the bottled-up grievances which could not be expressed openly during the years of repressive military rule. Following the return of democracy at the end of May 1999, these grievances were being expressed openly, sometimes violently. These issues must be seriously addressed by the current political leadership so as to achieve total reconciliation in order to ensure the country's development. This and other issues raised by the British Minister as indicated above are essential requirements for the sustenance of democracy, good governance and sound political leadership in our world today.

Any failure on the part of the political leadership to respond to these challenges in the best interest of the people is a serious breach of their mandate and duty to the electorate and the nation. Political leadership in this context goes beyond the executive government of the day. It includes the leadership of the three arms of government at the Federal and State levels as well as those who influence the political activities and actions of the government at these levels.

Continuing Challenges of Democratic Development

Throughout most of the chequered post-independence political history of Nigeria and the three decades of military rule, the country has been struggling to sustain the modern concepts of democratic governance and the rule of law. Understandably, this problem was not resolved by any of the military governments. Many Nigerians believed that with the return to democracy in 1999, the democratic process and the rule of law would become

entrenched as part of our national political culture, to the extent that the country would start witnessing genuine democratic elections. Unfortunately, despite the rhetoric from the political leadership elite, the battle to entrench the concept of democracy and the rule of law had still not been won even at the end of Obasanjo's democratically elected civilian administration in May 2007.

The first term of the Obasanjo-led democratic government of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) started on May 29, 1999 and ended on May 29, 2003. At the end of this first term, President Obasanjo and most of the other elected political leaders in both the executive and legislative arms of governments at the federal and state levels returned to the electorate to seek re-election for another term. From all accounts, they believed that they had carried out their mandate satisfactorily and in the best interest of the electorate and therefore deserved another term to continue their good work!

In the case of the President, being a devout Christian, he had to delay his own decision because he wanted to ascertain the wish of God as to whether or not he should run for a second term. He therefore fasted and prayed for several days as he waited for divine intervention and the message from God. As soon as he received the message, a press conference was arranged and he announced to Nigerians and the world that God had directed him to offer himself for another term of four years of selfless national service to the good people of Nigeria.

Unlike his first coming when he was welcomed to the presidency by most Nigerians, this time, the reception was mixed. Whilst some Nigerians expressed their delight with the President for deciding to seek re-election so as to

continue his good work in the interest of the country, others expressed their disappointment with his performance during the first term and wondered what miracle he would perform if given another opportunity. Interestingly, his supporters and opposers belong to different parts of the country, which is probably the beauty of the democratic system of government. They were drawn from different shades of political opinion and included several respectable men and women from a cross section of Nigerians and the international community. From the different views expressed, it was evident that some genuinely believed that President Obasanjo had done well for Nigeria and therefore deserved another term to complete his assignments, while others believed the exact opposite.

As reported in the *Champion Newspaper* of April 29, 2002, one supporting view came from a highly respected Nigerian and former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Chief Emeka Anyaoku. In the *Champion Newspaper* report under the heading, 'President Needs a Second Term – Anyaoku', Chief Anyoaku, who was the Chairman of the Presidential Committee on International Affairs, was reported as having stated that he had advised President Obasanjo to work towards resolving issues relating to the structure of the nation. To this end, he advised the President "to redouble his energy and address the issues of the structure of the Nigerian policy." On the subject of the President's decision to seek re-election, Chief Anyaoku was reported to have said that President Obasanjo needed a second term to complete most of the programmes he had begun. He also added that the most Nigerians could give the President at the time was their support to enable

him carry out his programmes. In conclusion, he stated: "I believe the country has been waiting for him to say so, and he has said so. He said he wants to complete the task he has begun. I am glad to hear him say so and I believe he deserves our support in order to complete what he has started." Chief Anyaoku's views were also supported by some other Nigerians from different ethnic and political backgrounds.

A different view was expressed by another eminent Nigerian in a report published in the *Post Express* of May 1, 2002 under the title "Okogie opposes Obasanjo's second term bid." In the report, Dr. Anthony Olubunmi Okogie, the Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, reacting to President Obasanjo's declaration of his intention to seek re-election, stated that Obasanjo's tenure as a military ruler and as a civilian President did not yield positive results, and that there was therefore no need for him to contest again, adding that he should allow people with more progressive ideas to rule the country. The Archbishop condemned the use of God's name by the President and other Nigerians who have nothing serious to offer the nation. He observed that the President and such people were only taking Nigerians for a ride when they claimed to be consulting God on election issues, cautioning that people should not use God's name in vain. On Obasanjo's performance during his first term, Dr. Okogie stated that Nigerians only read of 'democracy dividends' on the pages of newspapers and that the standard of living of ordinary Nigerians had dropped to the lowest level ever, adding that most of the common staple food items were out of the reach of ordinary Nigerians. He also stated that the high cost of transportation was another headache for Nigerians due

to the incessant increase of prices of petroleum products in the country. For these reasons, Dr. Okogie advised the President not to seek a second term.

Interestingly, these conflicting views on the same subject were recorded by two eminent men of integrity who are highly respected not only in Nigeria but all over the world. Chief Emeka Anyaoku is a seasoned diplomat and a renowned international civil servant of outstanding integrity and competence. During his well over 30 years of service in the Commonwealth Secretariat, he brought honour and respectability to Nigeria, Africa and the black race. Archbishop Olubunmi Okogie is an illustrious clergyman and intellectual held in high esteem by millions of Nigerians both within and outside his religious circle. As men of honour, it was evident that the two gentlemen spoke out of conviction and from their own perception of the subject matter. Since they both had a lot of followers and admirers, it was also evident that there were millions of Nigerians who shared these opposing views, which was a healthy sign for a democratic society.

In any event, from the standpoint of the average Nigerian, especially from the position of the poor Nigerians in urban and rural areas, and these constitute about 90% of the population and the electorate, the issue was not whether or not Obasanjo should offer himself for a second term. The issue for them was the extent to which the PDP government under President Obasanjo's leadership had improved their lives and living conditions by eliminating those societal deficiencies that had plagued the nation for many years. That was the fundamental issue. Some of the ills include corruption, mismanagement of the nation's resources, poverty, a negative attitude to ethnicity resulting

in all forms of injustice, arrogance, the abuse of power, deceit, and the insincerity of the ruling class and the leadership elite who see themselves as masters rather than servants of the people and the electorate. All these and more were the societal evils that plagued Nigeria for many years, and the people and the international community expected the new leaders to eradicate these in the interest of a better Nigerian society that would guarantee the entrenchment and survival of the democratic system. The question therefore was: how many of these objectives had been achieved under the new democratic government?

Others who spoke publicly against the idea of a second term for Chief Obasanjo included such distinguished Nigerians as Chief Olu Falae and Chief Gani Fawehinmi. In his own statement, Chief Falae said: 'If they had not rigged the election, I would have become President in 1999. I would not have gone for a second term and that is the declaration I want to make today.....' He added that he would not be a slave to the second term syndrome' if he were President and that it was in that spirit that he was appealing to Obasanjo, who was his friend and former boss, to reconsider his re-election declaration.

Chief Falae then proceeded to state that President Obasanjo had, in any case, spent two terms as Nigeria's leader, first as a military Head of State with absolute state powers and later as a civilian President and Commander-in-Chief, and that in line with the spirit of the Nigerian Constitution, nobody, however good he may be, should dominate our lives for more than eight years. "He should obey the spirit of the Constitution," he added. Chief Falae also criticised those that said that only Obasanjo was credible enough to occupy the office of the President in

Nigeria at the time. "I feel insulted by that kind of statement. He should be charitable enough to acknowledge that if I sit in Aso Rock, I will do a fairer job than he is doing. How can some people say that he is the only credible person?"

He described the Obasanjo Administration as a disaster, and proceeded to expatiate as follows:

In all, I am afraid this government has been a complete letdown, not only to Nigerians, but even with its foreign sponsors, they are terribly disappointed. The truth is that President Obasanjo came to office without a blueprint; the party through which he came had no programme, so he got to Aso Rock without a compass, no focus, no direction. As a result, wherever you turn, be it the judiciary, legislature, or the executive, it is the same problem: crisis and failure. One after the other and all in all, it has been a discouraging performance overall. Any policy that cannot be articulated, fine-tuned and promptly implemented is no policy at all. If President Obasanjo has any blueprint he brought into government, we have not seen it; there is no evidence that he had such. In fact, the way I will describe it is that if you go into government without any clear idea as to what you want to do with power, you would arrive in Aso Rock without a compass and you will be lost at sea on day one which is what has happened to this government, all you have is routine administration....

Speaking on the economy, Chief Falae stated that before the Obasanjo government had assumed office, the inflation rate was below 10%, but that it had increased to 18%. On the exchange rate, he said that the naira which exchanged

with the US Dollar at ₦84.00 had since risen under the Obasanjo Administration to well over ₦140.00. He continued, "We are in an economic crisis in the nation. How do you revive industries when the banks are lending at 35%. The interest rate is a barrier to agriculture. Lack of government subsidy or attention is a barrier to agriculture or industrial development. We need companies and factories...."

Another high profile presidential candidate who spoke on similar lines with Chief Olu Falae at the material time was Chief Gani Fawehinmi, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria and human rights activist. In an interview published in the *Post Express*, he described the performance of the Obasanjo government during the period as a dismal failure. He maintained that President Obasanjo personified "disaster at every turn and catastrophe in every direction, politically, economically and socially and, in terms of mis-governance, ineptitude and incompetence..." While stating that President Obasanjo lacked any leadership quality, he insisted that "whilst Obasanjo was a military Head of State between 1976 and 1979, he covered his inadequacies with military dictatorship." and that because such a style could not be applied in a democratic environment, "he had become incapable of governing Nigeria..." In the same statement, Gani Fawehinmi further alleged that "the Obasanjo Administration has failed to eliminate corruption and that although everybody knows his regime is corrupt, Obasanjo is the only person who does not know that his regime is corrupt."

Obasanjo Elected for a Second Term

Despite all the criticisms of the Obasanjo Administration as well as the controversy, bitter politicking and arguments

for and against Obasanjo's bid for a second term, the elections came and passed. As expected by most serious observers of the political scene, President Obasanjo and most of the incumbent state governors sponsored by the leading political parties were re-elected for a second term in May 2003.

As a result, Obasanjo and the Peoples' Democratic Party were returned to power, along with the majority of their supporters at the federal and state legislatures. They all assumed office on May 29, 2003 and thereafter the struggle to sustain democracy and the rule of law continued. Once again, it was established in Nigeria, as in most other African countries, that it is not an easy task for incumbent political leaders to be removed from office under the prevailing democratic environment in these new democracies.

From Obasanjo to Yar'adua: the Continuation of the Struggle to Entrench Democracy and the Rule of Law

The struggle to entrench genuine and durable democratic principles and the rule of law in Nigeria's democratic institutions continued during President Obasanjo's second term; from May 2003 to May 2007. From all accounts, this was far from smooth and easy as it witnessed several difficulties, challenges and setbacks. Those who had hoped that the Nigerian leadership elite would, under President Obasanjo, muster enough political will to achieve the kind of political structure or system that meets the expectations and aspirations of all well-meaning Nigerians from all parts of the country were disappointed.

The four most important events that took place during this period were: the aborted National Political Reform Conference, the installation of various economic reform programmes, the problem of structural changes and constitutional reform measures skillfully destroyed by the tenure elongation controversy, and the heartwarming re-awakening of the Judiciary. As we proceed, we will examine the role of the leadership elite in these major political challenges as well as the endless difficulties with 'free and fair elections' in Nigeria.



CHAPTER 8



THE LEADERSHIP PROBLEM

In every culture and in all human activities, the primary function of a leader is to carefully and skillfully lead and direct those who follow towards the pursuit and achievement of desired goals or objectives. The term 'lead' suggests that the person who leads performs the act of showing the way by directing and guiding the actions, activities and conduct of the group that is being led. Good leaders are generally rare and for this reason they are not easy to find. This is why it is sometimes said that leaders ARE LIKE EAGLES, THEY DON'T FLOCK, YOU FIND THEM ONE AT A TIME. A leader is therefore someone who engages in carrying out the functions of leadership in the sense that he or she is totally committed to the achievement of the desired corporate or group objectives. The success or failure of any group or organisation depends, to a great extent, on the background, character,

education, integrity and degree of exposure of its leaders. Good quality leaders with vision and character produce good results. No nation can be great under the leadership of incapable and ill-equipped leaders. Great, selfless and well-equipped leaders produce the best results in all human societies.

Leadership is also defined as the art of influencing people in such a way as to make them work willingly and with great zeal, enthusiasm and commitment in the pursuit and achievement of specific objectives or goals. In other words, leadership is a relationship in which the person playing the leadership role directs or influences others, who are his followers, to work together willingly and, quite often, collectively on some tasks or assignments designed for the achievement of a common goal.

An effective leader would have no difficulty in influencing his group to attain the desired objectives with total commitment on the part of his followers. Such a leader would not merely stand behind and push the group. On the contrary, he would place himself ahead of the group, influencing and inspiring all the group members as he uses his leadership skill to facilitate the achievement of the desired corporate goals and objectives.

The nature of human society makes it absolutely necessary for us to have good leaders and effective leaderships. There would have been no need for leaders and leadership if all human beings, institutions, nations and organisations could function efficiently, with each individual operating at full capacity without any encouragement or supervision. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Most human beings need to be guided, encouraged, inspired, motivated and influenced before they

are able to put in their best to any assignment. Almost without exception, every enterprise, organisation, group or nation that seems to be doing well or performing to its full capacity is doing so because it has the right kind of leadership, with qualities which include: (a) the capacity to understand the group that they are leading, their interests and desires as well as the things that motivate them as human beings; (b) the ability to inspire people; and (c) the capacity to conduct themselves in a manner that encourages the people in the group to feel committed to the desired objectives and to do so with loyalty to the leadership.

In the light of the foregoing, it is evident that in all business enterprises, organisations, nations and indeed all group activities, there can be no better alternative to an efficient and committed leadership. Any group, society or organisation that does not have well-directed and disciplined leadership will be disorganized, uncoordinated and in disarray, with members pulling in different and opposite directions.

Some Essential Qualities of a Leader

A leader is a pace-setter and must set the right examples. Since the leader is expected to inspire, motivate, innovate, originate and lead his or her followers towards the achievement of the desired goal, he or she must always be ahead of his or her followers and should be able to challenge the status quo whenever necessary, in the best interest of the group. Undoubtedly, the background, character and personal attributes of an individual is a major factor in determining leadership capability.

Some of the most outstanding qualities of the ideal leader include a high level of intelligence, wisdom, good

judgment, imagination, initiative, enthusiasm and a sense of optimism. A negative and cynical person is not likely to inspire others. A good leader must also have a lot of courage, an ability to communicate effectively, a reasonable sense of justice and fair play, self confidence, and the ability to supervise, inspire and motivate others. He or she must be humane, but strong-willed and certainly not fickle. A warm and charming personality will also give immense value to a leader, but more importantly, he should be imbued with a high sense of maturity and the ability to make sound judgments of people and situations. There is some truth in the saying that 'leaders are born and not made.' This theory is supported by the fact that some good leaders start showing signs of their leadership potential at very early stages of their lives, either at infancy or while at the primary school, college, or university.

Although many good leaders developed their leadership qualities later in their lives, we should be wary and suspicious of any person who suddenly aspires to a leadership position in politics or other group activities at 40, 50, or 60 years of age, especially if such a person has never shown any leadership traits earlier in his or her life. We should also be wary and suspicious of any person who suddenly aspires to a leadership position just because he or she has made a lot of money suddenly in circumstances that are questionable or difficult to understand.

Apart from the above qualities, a leader needs vital character traits such as integrity, humility and flexibility. These traits may be inborn or acquired, but either way, they should be nurtured and developed to advance the leader in the exercise of his leadership functions.

Good and Effective Leadership

Undoubtedly, leadership is worthless if it is not good and effective. It has been suggested by some writers and authorities on leadership that one of the key attributes of effective leaders is that they are generally charismatic, in the sense that they have a natural gift or capacity to charm, attract, influence or inspire people. It may be true that some leaders are charismatic and we have had quite a few in Nigeria, but it does not follow that a good and effective leader must have this gift or that bad leaders do not also have the gift of charisma. History is full of instances of good and bad leaders with or without the gift of charisma. In my book *'Corporate Responsibility'*, I gave two world class examples. Both Adolph Hitler and Stalin were very charismatic individuals but they demonstrated the worst form of leadership in the 20th century. On the other hand, two American Presidents, Dwight Eisenhower and Harry Truman have been consistently recorded as examples of world leaders who provided good and effective leadership in their time, despite their lack of charisma.

In the light of what we have seen in the politics of Nigeria, there is probably a lot of merit in the suggestion that charisma could become a liability instead of an asset. A charismatic leader may get so intoxicated by the large following he arouses through his charismatic influence that he may become power drunk and pompous to the point of self-destruction as in the case of Hitler, Stalin and other bad leaders in world history, and possibly some of our own. Charisma, by itself, will not guarantee the effectiveness of a leader, but it could be useful asset to a purposeful leader who is able to recognize his limitations.

In any event, with or without charisma, it is only an effective leadership that understands its functions and responsibilities that will be capable of exercising its responsibilities judiciously and in the best interest of the group, nation or organization concerned. Such a leadership must be hardworking and enterprising with a high sense of responsibility and must be capable of thinking through the organizations' mission and the best way to achieve the desired objectives.

An effective leader will generally want to work with competent associates; he must determine the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce whose trust and loyalty he strives to earn. A leader must earn trust, or else he will have no followers. To trust a leader does not necessarily mean that one must agree with him always, or that one has to love or like him. It means that one believes in his word and his integrity, to the extent that one trusts that the leader means what he says. When the majority of the followers begin to doubt the sincerity of the leader, his statements and pronouncements, his position as leader has ceased to be effective. To remain effective, a leader must earn and retain the trust of those he leads.

Political Leadership and the Nigerian Leadership Elite

In view of the importance of political leadership in determining the political, economic and social conditions of any nation, especially in Africa and other developing nations where government plays a dominant role in all matters, special attention and consideration is given to the concept of leadership in our present context.

The fundamental principal of the concept of leadership, its basic nature, as well as leadership skills and functions, are generally the same, irrespective of the group that is being led. Therefore, the points made above concerning the characteristics of leadership, the attributes and qualities of a good and effective leader apply to all types of leaders whether they are religious leaders, leaders of corporations, trade unions or national political leaders.

Despite the great need for effective leaders in politics today, the general experience is that, with very few exceptions, there are many more outstanding leaders outside the world of politics in Africa. There are several reasons for this situation including the fact that there are greater demands on the political leadership than is the case in other areas, coupled with the low level of political development, as well as the casual and informal method of entry into politics. In the case of Nigeria which became independent in 1960, the thirty years of military rule also took its toll in the sense that it slowed down the process of development of the modern concept of democracy and the quality of its political leadership.

Since politics and political leadership are supreme in most developing countries, the relatively poor performance of the political leadership has adversely affected the development of these countries. To reverse the situation, positive steps must be taken to increase the quality of our political leadership by ensuring that only selfless, knowledgeable and committed leaders of integrity are placed in positions of political leadership. There is an urgent need for selfless and effective leadership in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. If we are to cope with the challenges of a highly competitive 21st century, decisive

steps must be taken to change the quality of the Nigerian leadership elite in the widest possible context. The delinquents who have invaded the country's leadership over the years, especially those who have continued to pollute the system, must be removed from positions of authority and influence as part of the national reformation exercise.

CHAPTER 9

THE ETHNIC FACTOR

In Nigeria, and indeed in all African nations, ethnicity has been a most destructive and divisive problem, which has constituted an impediment to the task of nation building. Its negative influence has been most obvious in those multi-ethnic countries struggling to build a modern nation out of the many ethnic groups that make up the nation concerned; especially those groups artificially brought together by European colonizers to form one nation at independence. Examples of such countries include Ivory Coast (Cote D’Voire), Ghana and Nigeria in West Africa, Kenya in East Africa and several others in different parts of Africa. In those countries with honest and mature leaders, who are able to handle the problem skillfully, the ethnic factor is usually down-sized; the reverse is the case in those countries with ill-equipped, corrupt and selfish leadership. In some cases, the leaders

even deliberately ignite ethnic clashes to serve their own selfish political interests and ambitions. In these countries, ethnic conflicts have led to wars and major national upheavals resulting in disastrous consequences detrimental to the stability and survival of the African nation concerned.

During the colonial days, ethnic conflicts were relatively rare mainly because the colonial authorities were able to hold the countries together by superior force. Throughout the period of the nationalist struggle for independence, there was hardly any indication of ethnic problems; the focus of the battle was between the Nigeria nationalist and the colonial authorities. As a matter of fact, up until independence in 1960, our diffuse multi-ethnicity did not adversely affect the nation's politics or hamper the allocation of national resources.

Unfortunately, ever since Nigeria's multi-ethnicity became a feature of the nation's chequered political life several decades ago, it has become a destructive and divisive factor in practically all aspects of our national life, especially in the allocation of the nation's resources and in the sharing of the so called 'national cake'. This is one more area in which most Nigerians, especially those who have been direct victims of the negative aspects of this phenomenon, feel thoroughly let down by the leadership elite. Most discerning Nigerians and friends of Nigeria believe that the lukewarm attitude of the country's political leaders in tackling this problem has considerably slowed down the country's development into full nationhood, five decades after it achieved political independence from Great Britain. The general belief is that the eradication of its most negative features would eliminate the many injustices that

exist in the country's political structure. This is a challenge that should be addressed as part of the reformation process, if we really must remove such negative factors as disunity, violent crimes, corruption and all the social vices that tend to disturb the nation's stability, national cohesion, progress and development.

In his book, *The Trouble With Nigeria*, published in 1983 by the Fourth Dimension Publishers, Professor Chinua Achebe described tribalism or ethnicity as the major problem that has worked against national integration in Nigeria. The relevant section of the book reads in part as follows:

Nothing in Nigeria's political history captures her problem of national integration more graphically than the chequered fortune of the word "tribe" in her vocabulary. Tribe has been accepted at one time as a friend, rejected as an enemy at another, and finally smuggled in through the back-door as an accomplice.

In the lifetime of many Nigerians who still enjoy an active public career, Nigeria was called 'a mere geographical expression' not only by the British who had an interest in keeping it so, but even by our 'nationalists' when it suited them to retreat into tribes to check their more successful rivals from other parts of the country. As a student in Ibadan, I was an eyewitness to that momentous occasion when Chief Obafemi Awolowo 'stole' the leadership of western Nigeria from Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in broad daylight on the floor of the western house of assembly and sent the great Zik scampering to the Niger 'from whence (he) came.'

Someday when we shall have outgrown tribal politics or when our children shall have done so, sober historians of the Nigerian nation will see that event as the abortion of a pan-Nigerian vision which, however ineptly, the NCNC tried to have and to hold. No matter how anyone attempts to explain away that event in retrospect, it was the death of a dream Nigeria in which a citizen could live and work in a place of his choice anywhere' and pursue any legitimate goal open to him. A Nigeria in which an Easterner might aspire to be premier in the West and a northerner become mayor of Enugu. That day Nigeria suffered a death-blow from Awolowo's 'success' in the western House of Assembly in 1951. Perhaps it was an unrealistic dream at the best of times, but some young educated men and women of my generation did dream it.

And though it died, it never fully faded from our consciousness. You could always find idealistic people from every part of Nigeria who were prepared to do battle if anyone (especially Europeans or Americans) should ask them: what is your tribe? "I am a Nigerian" they would say haughtily, drawing themselves to their fullest height. Though alive and well, tribe had an embarrassing odour.

Then a strange thing happened at our independence in 1960. Our national anthem, our very hymn of deliverance from British colonial bondage, was written for us by a British woman who unfortunately had not been properly briefed on the current awkwardness of the word tribe. So we found ourselves on independence morning, rolling our tongues around the very same trickster godling:

"Though tribe and tongue may differ In brotherhood we stand!"

It was a most ominous beginning. And not surprisingly, we did not stand too long in brotherhood. Within six years we were standing or sprawling on a soil soaked in fratricidal blood. When it finally ceased to flow we were ready for a new anthem written this time by ourselves. And we took care to expunge the jinxed word tribe. And to be absolutely certain we buried the alien anthem in its own somnolent Evangeline hymn juice (concocted incidentally by another British woman, the third in a remarkable line, the first being Lugard's girlfriend who christened us Nigeria) and invoked the natural dance rhythm of our highlife to mark our national rebirth.

But this entire self-conscious wish to banish 'tribe' has proved largely futile, because a word will stay around as long as there is work for it to do. In Nigeria, in spite of our protestation, there is plenty of work for tribe. Our threatening gesture against it has been premature, half-hearted or plain deceitful!

For instance, a Nigerian child seeking admission into a federal school, a student wishing to enter a college or university, a graduate seeking employment in the public service, a businessman tendering for a contract, a citizen applying for a passport, filing a report with the police or seeking access to any of the hundred thousand avenues controlled by the state, will sooner or later fill out a form which require him to confess his tribe (or less crudely and more hypocritically, his state of origin).

Intelligent and useful discussion of tribalism is very often thwarted by vagueness. What is tribalism? I will spare you a comprehensive academic definition. For practical purpose let us say that tribalism is any form of discrimination against a citizen because of his place of birth.

Everyone agrees that there are manifestations of tribal culture which we cannot condemn; for example, unique habits of dress, food, language, music, etc. In fact, many of these manifestations are positive and desirable and confer richness on our national culture.

However to prevent a citizen from living or working anywhere in his country or from participating in the social, political, economic life of the community in which he chooses to live based on his "tribal origin" is another matter altogether. Our constitution disallows it even though, like its policy makers, it manages to say and unsay on certain crucial issues.

Prejudice against 'outsiders' or 'strangers' is an attitude one finds everywhere. But no modern state can lend its support to such prejudice without undermining its own progress and civilization. America, which we copy when it suits us, provides us with an excellent example in this connection: that although we may not be able to legislate prejudice and bigotry out of the hearts and minds of the individual citizen, the state itself and all its institutions must not practice, endorse or condone such habits. Not long ago, I was writing a recommendation for a postgraduate student seeking admission into the University of Pittsburgh, USA. The form had the following direction in bold print to referees:

Please make no statement which would indicate the applicant's race, creed or national origin.

Defenders of the Nigerian system may point out that the American nation is two hundred years old while Nigeria is only twenty. But don't forget Nigeria declared an ambition to become an advanced nation in the shortest possible time, preferably by the year 2000.

Chinua Achebe's book that contains these excellent and heavily loaded extracts on the problem of ethnicity or tribalism in Nigeria was written in 1983, over 30 years ago. I have read several books on the problems of ethnicity in Africa and Nigeria and I myself have written on the subject in some of my books, but no one has captured this subject in the Nigerian context as accurately and in such lucid language as in these extracts from Professor Achebe's book. Due to its relevance in our present context, we had to reproduce the extracts mainly because of its great value in reinforcing our understanding of the ethnic problems in Nigeria and the inability of our leadership elite to address the problems with commitment and sincerity.

Surprisingly, although Achebe's remarks were made in 1983, the comments remain relevant and valid well over thirty years after they were made. Unfortunately, none of the country's leaders or regimes have been able to take positive steps aimed at eliminating the problems of multi-ethnicity in the task of building a modern nation out of the many ethnic groups that constitute the Nigerian state. As recent as 1999-2007, the period when the Nigeria government was headed by President Obasanjo, the ethnic factor was still a major issue and was raised in several national discussions and by the Nigerian media. Like other leaders before him, President Obasanjo, on several

occasions, found it necessary to declare that he was totally detribalized and that none of his government's decisions were based on ethnic considerations; however some of his critics countered in support of their position that ethnicity was still a major deciding factor in his government's policies.

Constitution Recognizes the Negative Effects of Ethnicity

In any event, it is noteworthy that the 1999 constitution clearly recognizes the existence of negative ethnicity as a major national problem. To this end, it introduced measures aimed at reducing its adverse features under the provisions of the directive principles of the Federal Character concept. The Presidential system of government and the entire process of electing the president are aimed at ensuring that no tribalistic person ever becomes the President of Nigeria. This is why the entire Federation, not only his own home area, must record a reasonable percentage of votes for the President to qualify for election. Another useful constitutional provision is the stipulation that in the distribution of offices and other national resources, the Federal Character of Nigeria must always be taken into account. The concept of 'Federal Character' was introduced in the hope that it would promote unity and foster national loyalty. The success of such checks and balances depend on the integrity of the country's political leadership and the courage of the key officers of the three arms of government.

Under the Presidential system of democratic government, the president has a major role to play in ensuring that problems associated with ethnic factors in

this regard are carefully managed so as to avoid serious conflicts that may threaten national stability or create further ethnic tension in an already charged environment. The kind of situation that prompted the Nigerian *Guardian* editorial of August 1, 2002 on the conflict between the presidency and the senate, over the appointment of an Auditor-General, should be avoided at all costs in the interest of national stability and cohesion. In that editorial, under the title "Appointing An Auditor-General", *The Guardian* had this to say:

Not surprisingly, the appointment of a substantive Auditor-General of the Federation has been mired in political controversy. Twice, President Olusegun Obasanjo has forwarded the name of Mr. Joseph Ajiboye to the Senate for confirmation as the new Auditor-General. Twice the senate has spurned the President's request. The only known reason for the Senate's rejection is the geo-political zone of origin of Mr. Joseph Ajiboye. Although the nominee hails from Kogi State, and therefore of the Middle Belt stock, he is of Yoruba extraction. This has become a handicap because the Governors of the Central Bank, Chief Sanusi, and the Accountant-General of the federation, Mr. J. K. Naiyeju, are Yoruba. Besides, the minister of State of Finance, Chief Martins Kuye, is also a Yoruba.

To appoint a fourth Yoruba to such a strategic office in the public financial regulatory and monitoring sector, it is reasoned, is politically unhealthy. In buttress, members of the senate Public Accounts Committee have referred to S.14 (3) of the 1999 Constitution, which is the directive principal on federal character. ,=Thus, six months after he began acting, Mr. Ajiboye's confirmation was in abeyance.

In fact, the period of his acting capacity expired in July, and the country is at present without an Auditor-General. Section 86(3) of the Constitution provides that except with the sanction of a resolution of the senate, no person shall act as Auditor-General for more than six months. In Mr. Ajiboye's case, no further extension has been granted. The Auditor-General is constitutionally empowered to audit public accounts of the Federation and all offices and courts. States also have Auditor-General. They are empowered to conduct periodic checks of all government statutory corporations, commissions, authorities and agencies. While the Auditor-General of the Federation reports to the National Assembly in the exercise of his functions, he is not subject to the direction or control of any other authority or person.

Upon the retirement of Chief Pius Akubueze, the immediate past Auditor-General, last October, the Federal Civil Service Commission screened qualified directors to pick a successor to Akubueze. Two names, Ajiboye and Mr. Vincent Azie (Anambra), were short-listed and forwarded to President Obasanjo. The President, persuaded by the criteria of seniority and merit, exercised his discretion in favour of Ajiboye, which is in consonance with the rules of promotion in the Civil Service. But appointments to top positions in the civil service, such as auditor-general of the Federation, are not wholly a question of seniority alone. Politics is involved, especially as the nominee has to be endorsed by the Senate. What is desirable may not be politically expedient. And the senate itself is a political institution representing various shades of interest. While the advancement of

those interests would often come to play in the debate and passage of bills, we do not expect the senate to thrash up ethnicity in so vulgar a manner as though other criteria did not matter. Ethnicity in a plural and factionous society such as ours requires deft political management. Otherwise, a lot of unnecessary heat is generated, thereby attention is deflected from substance and mediocrity supplants merit. Invariably, Nigerians must learn to tame the primordial sentiment that have now deadlocked the ratification of the nominee for the office of Auditor-General.

The subsisting ego flexing between the President and the Senate could have been avoided. This is, if President Obasanjo has carefully ruminated over the potential political backlash from Mr. Ajiboye's nomination for clearance by the Senate. This is against the background of widespread insinuations of ethnically motivated appointments earlier made by the President. Considering the prevailing deadlock, seniority alone may not suffice as a criterion for the confirmation of Mr. Ajiboye's nomination. The choice left may be difficult but not insurmountable. It would damp staff moral if service conventions were ignored and Mr. Ajiboye was bypassed for his subordinate to be appointed. If that happened, Mr. Ajiboye's stay in the department would also conventionally be untenable, since he cannot report to his junior who would now be his boss. One alternative is to ease him out of service. But that should never happen.

Under the arbitrariness of military regimes, that was the regular recourse to sort out a knotty problem such as the present one. The solution was often abused, such that when anybody wanted to flush out persons they maliciously considered undesirable, they simply

elevated subordinates over their superiors and then retired the latter. That should not even be contemplated in Ajiboye's case. This is even more so as the nominee for the post of Auditor-General of the federation still has some years before he reaches the mandatory retirement age; and in the interim he can legitimately look forward to more years of service to the nation in many capacities. But in the prevailing calculus, both the president and senate will have to find some accommodation, albeit a political solution that would not necessarily sacrifice the dual qualities of loyalty and competence.

For obvious reasons, the Nigerian press which had virtually assumed the status of the people's mouthpiece on national issues since the return of democratic governance in May 1999, refused to give up on this subject of the appointment of the Auditor-General and the disagreement between the Presidency and the Senate on the ethnic, constitutional and federal character implications of the subject. As a result, soon after the Guardian editorial, other newspapers and journals followed with their own comments on much the same lines. In the *Champion* comments which featured in Abubakar Jika's regular political column, he decided to give a north-western zonal flavor to the controversial subject. Under the title, still on the Auditor-General, he stated as follows:

One of President Olusegun Obasanjo's famed traits is stubbornness. When he makes up his mind, he is said to be impossible to dissuade. It is one characteristic many of his erstwhile supporters cite for disagreeing with him. Speaker Ghali Na'abba, Mohammed Abubakar Rimi, two of his notable

supporters from Kano during the PDP Jos Presidential primaries are today Obasanjo's most bitter critics on account of his stubbornness. While firmness is a respected trait, inflexibility is a weakness. It is a symbol of wisdom to listen a lot and a wise leader not only listens but also appears to listen. It is a great weakness to listen to only one voice. It is a great leadership tragedy to believe that only one's reasons are cogent or applicable.

In Obasanjo and the North West, I agree that the vacant office of the Auditor-General of the Federation offers Obasanjo a unique and unprecedented opportunity to further his transparency claims. I wrote: "assuming President Obasanjo decides to be as open and as transparent as he claims, who should be chosen to audit his account? Whose reports would be more credible and believable between a Yoruba man and a northerner? Since Obasanjo is a Yoruba man, an Audit report authored by another Yoruba man would of course be legally accepted. But is it politically acceptable?" More so, if Obasanjo appointed him?

President Obasanjo, before this write up, wrote to the Senate nominating a fellow Yoruba, Mr. Ajiboye as Auditor-General- a request the Senate turned down on the valid grounds that it violates the constitution on federal character principles. The President who approves expenditures is a Yoruba. His minister of state, who is virtually running the ministry of Finance, is Yoruba. The accountant general who releases funds is a Yoruba. The Governor of Central Bank who keeps custody of government funds is Yoruba. The logic is, if the Accountant General who prepares the accounts is a Yoruba, why do you appoint another Yoruba to audit these accounts? More so, as

these are not coincidences as the Auditor-General has been nominated by President Obasanjo who is Yoruba. Where is the credibility and transparency in all these? Actually, I advocated that President Obasanjo should look Northwest, a region that is marginalized to fill this quota. It may look cheaper to get a kinsman to cover the back of his accounts, but this is less credible and defeatist in the long run as this is threatening to blot the public integrity of these reports. Are there no other credible Nigerians who can vouch for his accounts except his fellow Yoruba?

Umar Mohammed and Abbas Alli in their "Obasanjo, Transparency and North West" supported these arguments. They believe it is politically smarter in the circumstance of Nigeria of today, for Obasanjo to look for someone without ethnic or religious ties to him to audit his account. Their arguments were quite credible. The post as defined by the constitution is a public position, whose appointment has to be endorsed by the Senate, just as that of minister or ambassadors, which validate these arguments. Ajiboye was appointed July 15th 1974, while Mr. VSC Azie, an Igbo was appointed July 1st 1974. Mr Azie is therefore senior to Mr. Ajiboye and what Obasanjo is doing is what would undermine seniority in the civil service. Ozi-Usman contends that the Al Ghazil Federal civil service commission nominated both Azie and Ajiboye and in the circumstance it was strange and unjustified for Obasanjo to insist on his kinsman when seniority and merit do not exclusively favour the choice. Ozi-Usman disclosed that the acting appointment of Ajiboye and Obasanjo's insistence on re-nominating him has now turned the (Audit) department into two irrevocable forces: Ajiboye and Azie. This is very

dangerous and can threaten the credibility of Ajiboye's reports and undermine civil service integrity.

In the circumstance, President Olusegun Obasanjo has no credible alternative but to revisit this matter. I doubt if the Senate in the circumstance can destroy its credibility by doing what Obasanjo wants of it. What will the Senate tell us? The Senate resolved that since the governor of Central Bank, the Accountant-General of the Federation and the nominee for Auditor General are from the same geo-political zone, it would be a total negation of section 14(3) of the constitution to endorse the nomination. What has changed? Neither the Constitution nor persons referred to have changed. The senate would irretrievably destroy its remaining credibility if it acceded to his request.

However, since Mr. Azie, Mr. Ajiboye's senior is in the department whose staff are now polarized, there is a need to work out an acceptable alternative. To nominate Azie now to replace Ajiboye would not only amount to loss of face for Obasanjo and hurt his ego, it would irretrievably set the two camps against each other. It may not surprise me if these differences take ethnic coloration, along Yoruba-Igbo lines. This needs to be avoided. The only credible alternative is my proposal: find and appoint a credible North westerner as Auditor- General. The search should be wide, professionalism and competence should not be compromised in the process. It should be somebody the two battle weary camps can accept as a solid professional, one whose primary goal is to take the office to higher heights. I believe many exist who can fit the bill. What is required is honesty and commitment to search.

These press comments have been reproduced in this text, not only because of their relevance to our theme, but above all, to illustrate the highly sensitive nature of the ethnic factor in today's Nigerian nation. Undoubtedly, the Nigerian situation calls for mature, selfless and committed leaders of integrity who can be trusted to make sound and equitable decisions in the interest of all Nigerians and in the overall national interest. The political leadership should know by now that Nigerians have over the years become politically aware of their rights and interests and that the days of deceitful politics are now numbered, if not over.

In view of the special position of the President under the presidential system, it is crucial that the president should conduct our national affairs in such a way to be seen by Nigerians from all the country's many ethnic groups as their political father who can be trusted to protect their individual interests at all times. The president, being human, cannot be expected to satisfy 180 million Nigerians, but the president has a duty to ensure that he conducts the nation's affairs in a transparent manner so that his actions can be easily justified on the grounds that such actions or omissions are equitable and constitutionally correct and in the overall national interest. Any criticism of such reasonable and just presidential actions can be easily dismissed. Problems do arise however when actions taken in the name of the president are unacceptable to reasonable Nigerians and difficult for supporters of the president to defend on grounds of justice, reason, equity and logic; especially where such actions are seen by some ethnic groups or political zones as indications that the president is out to work against their interest.

Undoubtedly, the problem of ethnicity is a serious national problem. It has been with us for several decades and has only been partially recognized but not seriously addressed by most regimes since independence and because of the absence of right political will, its eradication has not been approached with sincerity and commitment by the country's political leadership. If we are to achieve the desired national peace, unity and development, this subject must be addressed as a matter of national priority.



CHAPTER 10



CORRUPTION AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Corruption is a universal problem. It exists in varying degrees in every human society and in all parts of the developed and developing world. It is therefore not an exclusively Nigerian problem. It has become a serious issue in Nigeria, because the level of corruption in the country has reached an alarming scale in recent years to the extent that it has become a major obstacle to national progress and development. Instead of the leadership elite devising methods of reducing this societal disease, they have been promoting its negative hold on the society and its systems. The situation has reached epic proportions with the leadership elite being the primary engine of corruption to the detriment of the social and economic interest of those they claim to lead.

During the 1960s and most of the 1970s, the level of corruption in Nigeria was relatively low and in those days, the world had no reason to describe Nigeria as one of the most corrupt nations of the world. Between then and the end of the 20th century, the level of corruption had escalated so rapidly that by the year 2000, Transparency International, an international organization actively involved in the fight against global corruption, described Nigeria as the most corrupt nation in the world. Since then, Nigeria has improved in their classification, possibly as a result of the war against corruption embarked upon by the Obasanjo administration with the creation of such agencies as the EFCC and the ICPC. According to the latest classification, Nigeria has been “upgraded” to the 10th position amongst the world’s most corrupt countries, which is still less than enviable. From all accounts, the war against corruption in Nigeria is a long way from victory.

In his book titled *Leading Africa out of ‘Chaos’* published by Spectrum Books Limited, Professor Iyorwuese Hagher, in discussing the problem of corruption, suggested that only a God-centred approach to leadership can effectively reduce the negative effects of corruption in the country. He also made the important point that corruption has been able to have such a strong negative hold in Nigeria because of the corrupt mindset of Nigerians, especially those in leadership positions in government, politics and different areas of the nation’s public and private sectors. He submits, in effect, that if this corrupt mindset did not exist in our society, especially at the top levels of the country’s leadership, its negative effects would not have been so devastating. Our experience whilst researching for this book lends ample validity to the distinguished Professor’s assertion.

Why the Leadership Elite is Accountable

In all human societies, the main function of a leader is to administer effectively by directing and guiding the actions of his followers and by setting goals, priorities and standards and always ensuring that the people comply with the settled standards. To ensure that the desired national objectives are achieved, the leaders are expected to lead by example. As a group, the Nigerian leadership elite failed woefully in this respect. This explains why Nigeria has lost so much as a direct result of the high level of corruption in the country. According to recent statistical information released by the United Nations and reported in the Punch Newspaper of November 14, 2007, Nigeria lost \$400 billion to corruption and graft in 39 years. If this huge amount had been invested in the development of the country, Nigeria would have been transformed and a lot of its infrastructural deficiencies could have been eliminated.

Undoubtedly, it is the character and nature of the country's leadership over the years and the mind-set of those in leadership positions that determines the nation's level of productivity and development, especially in this highly competitive world of the 21st century. It is the failure and ineffectiveness of leadership that made it possible for matters to degenerate so badly that Nigeria had to be classified as the most corrupt nation in the world at the beginning of the 21st Century. Unfortunately, in this tragedy, those who suffer most are the poor citizens who are the main victims of corruption. The most disturbing feature of corruption in Nigeria today is that most of its sponsors and perpetrators are in leadership positions and generally well off, while the victims are weak and poor citizens. As a result, corruption continues to breed more

poverty which creates other negative problems that breed insecurity and violent crimes, amongst others. Discussing this subject in his book referred to above, Professor Iyorwuese Hagher stated in part as follows:

Corruption breeds poverty, sickness, low life expectancy and unequal distribution of income and wealth. This face produced by corruption which was formerly the face of the third world and much more the portrait of Africa, can now be seen all over the world. Corruption is therefore a global phenomenon. Yet, the poor are mostly victims as their poverty is created by the greed of others. Corruption and poverty go hand-in-hand. One is the cause and the reason for the existence of the others. Corruption exists in all the World's systems. It cannot be eradicated completely. Though its face varies, it sometimes wears cosmetics, is reduced or enlarged, titled, bowed and may be even beheaded, it has a tendency of re-grafting new head on old trunks. Corruption is a human condition; it is a part of the fall of man, a negative pole that allows us to see and feel the positive side of goodness, love, caring and generosity. It provides a point of reference and launch pad away from itself, into his brother's pain, anguish; deprivation and death... At some stage, every nation and human community must undertake the journey from the city of corruption to that of the incorrupt...

Writing on the cost of corruption, Rose Ackerman describes this human denominator as self interest which when not tapped for productive purposes leads to endemic corruption. The portrait of production stands stark, boldly and challenging in full glare of

exhibition lights. It is not just the face of self-interest alone, but also greed. Self-interest is different; it spawns greed. Greed is born when the needs of the individual self are met, yet the desire to acquire money, power and influence relentlessly continues unabated.

All over the world, corruption exists where hoarding of resources exist, whether this is money, property or lands, means of movement, wives or husbands, children, friends, power or simply influence. When the drive for more, is more than the needs of self and not directed at the needs of others, the destination is greed. And when a person's greed clashes with the greed of others, the confrontation may give rise to compromise, sharing, group interests and resolution. In the first alternative, this may result in violence and, then, in war, which destroys the resource base, of met needs, that motivated the violence and confrontation in the first place. In the second case, social harmony is achieved and needs are met for the whole group, rather than individual greed.

As one ponders the magnitude of corruption in Nigeria alone, roughly estimated to be almost the equivalent of the national debt, which is over forty billion dollars, one is at a loss to reach a conclusion. Was corruption necessary as an alternative to violence as was the case in the 17th and 18th century England, or was it simply the work of greed, selfishness and booty capitalism? If the pervasive corruption in the Nigerian system is an inevitable step in the long and tedious process towards the institutionalization of democratic structures, as they now exist, then it means that it was an alternative to violence as ethnic groups unified in sharing the economic spoils through

their representatives in government. This implies that attempts to curtail corruption might heighten the anxiety for violence and war. Was it purely co-incidental that within seven days of passing the anti-graft bill in Nigeria, violence broke out in Kaduna between Christians and Moslems in which thousands lost their lives? Was this just co-incidental or was it somehow associated with the perceived marginalization of some northern moslem interests, whose economic fortunes nose-dived when a Yoruba Christian president embarked on economic reforms, which the north considered as an unfair and uneven economic playing field? If this is the case, does it not follow that the curbing of corruption in any political system may be considered as having serious security implications? This is because anarchy is an instinctive response, rooted in the nature of man when threatened by mounting pressures on his possible economic collapse.

As the World Bank, IMF and other international bodies embark on political conditionalities to reverse the aid agenda and deliberately use aid to improve "governance", a close monitoring of national security is needed. This is because the new agenda threatens national security. These international agencies, by targeting a plurality of actors (NGO's micro businesses, local communities, grassroots organization), undermine Central governments as they stimulate and strengthen pluralist local structures and communities to resist the centre. In Nigeria, this has had the effect of heightening and exacerbating ethnic violence like the experience of Oodua Peoples Congress, Arewa Peoples Congress, the Iteskiri, Urhobo, Ijaw and Ogoni clashes in

Nigeria. The Jukun-Kuteb, Tiv-Jukun, Kuteb-Chamba wars are all the responses of the ethnic groups and cultures peripherised, ignored, and abandoned in indifference. As we ponder the face of corruption; luminous mirroring of poverty and violence, we see the threat to democracy, by the ethnic and religious violence as a response to the attempts to curb corruption without establishing social justice and human rights to the people. In a situation where these do not co-exist, the survivalist logic leads people to take what they need or feel they are entitled to, instead of working for it. Laws are viewed instead as obstacles to be overcome rather than as binding rules. Social justice in terms of provision of modern amenities like water supply and electricity will ease tension and ethnic wars.

Whether we fully comprehend, agree or disagree with Professor Hagher's scholarly analysis of the negative effects of corruption and the ethnic and sectional conflicts provoked by attempts to curb it, the truth is that the distinguished Professor has raised some serious issues that deserve attention in the fight to rid our society of this destructive social disease. In any event, we cannot disagree on the underlisted negative and dangerous features:

- (a) That corruption is rampant in our society mainly as a result of excessive greed and a high degree of selfishness that completely ignores the interests of others;
- (b) That corruption breeds poverty, sickness and an unstable society in which the poor tend to hate the rich, resulting in insecurity, violent crimes and more poverty;

- (c) That corruption and poverty go hand in hand to the extent that they breed low life expectancy.
- (d) That to curb corruption effectively, there must be social justice in the form of modern amenities like water and electricity and a system that ensures justice for all.
- (e) That the invasion of the country's leadership by delinquents who have no respect for decency, law and order has further compounded the problem of corruption in Nigeria.

These and several other negative features of corruption make it imperative for all well-meaning Nigerians to join the crusade against corruption and corrupt leaders, who constitute the main obstacles in the battle to eradicate or reduce its negative effect in the development of the country.

Corruption as a National Disaster and Attempts by Different Regimes to Fight It

We cannot discuss corruption as a national disaster and the attempts by different regimes to fight it without going back to the origin of the problem in Nigeria. Corruption started on a relatively small scale during the First Republic, but it did not become a serious national problem until a few years after the civil war in the late 1970s. The civil war actually destroyed most of our national values and laid the foundation for the very high level of corruption, poverty and social injustice that became the most disturbing feature of our national life.

Although our founding fathers and the early nationalist who fought for independence were not saints,

most enlightened Nigerians believed that they were genuine national heroes who had very good intentions for the united, viable and peaceful Nigeria of their dream. Having fought for independence and later assumed leadership positions in the country's post-independence governments at federal and regional levels, they seem to have worked hard to establish and sustain systems, programmes and societal values designed to guarantee a healthy and economically viable human society, which were later allowed to decline and degenerate hopelessly, resulting in a nation and society totally different from the one inherited from the founding fathers of modern Nigeria.

It is on record that one of the reasons given by the military officers for the first military intervention in 1966, which terminated the first republic and removed the founding fathers of modern Nigeria from office, was to wipe out corruption. Unfortunately, subsequent events showed that corruption became more evident in the years that followed. It is also on record that many Nigerians believed that the military could perform miracles by eliminating the political problems of that period, which now appear insignificant when compared to subsequent experience in the years that followed.

By 1997 and 1998, most Nigerians were desperately yearning for an end to military rule and a return to the democratic system of government. It had by then dawned on Nigerians that the country had inherited a relatively better, healthier and disciplined human society from the immediate post-independence political leaders such as late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. M. I. Okpara, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Mallam Aminu Kano, to name a few of these great leaders

and national heroes. Our research has revealed that the vast majority of politically aware Nigerians from all parts of the country agree that during their time, the country had relatively selfless and committed leaders as well as disciplined and stable societies and governments that generally reflected the peoples' aspirations with the following positive features:

- i. Greater security of human lives and property and a total absence of such violent crimes as armed robbery that later became quite common during the 1980s and 1990s.
- ii. Low level of poverty and greater commitment on the part of the leaders and governments to the social and economic well being of the people.
- iii. Relatively low level of corruption in the sense that corruption was not a major national problem, especially in the public services, contrary to the situation today.
- iv. Complete absence of the drug menace, drug trafficking, examination malpractices and the student cult menace. No one had heard about students murdering their colleagues until as recently as the early 1980s.
- v. There was a high level of religious tolerance. There was freedom of worship and an absence of state involvement in religious matters. In this regard, leaders like Sir, Ahmadu Bello, Dr. M. I. Okpara and Chief Awolowo set very positive examples. They recognized the dangers and hazards associated with religious intolerance in

a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society and took positive steps to control and check such dangers by their own individual actions, examples and utterances. Today, the reverse is now the case.

- vi. There was greater commitment to education and character development at all levels of society. As a result, the quality of education was much higher and people were generally better behaved and more caring than is the case today in the Nigeria of the 21st century.
- vii. The tragic features of the present Nigerian society which take the form of materialism, greed and worship of money were virtually unknown under these early leaders. This is one of the most destructive features of the present Nigerian society. In the days of these national heroes, the Nigerian society was not materialistic and the people did not indulge in any form of money worship. On the contrary, most citizens had a measure of contempt for money acquired illegally or through dubious means. The leaders in those early days could not and did not condone the new "419" mentality and its negative features. No respectable church or religious body would confer a Knighthood, or Chieftaincy title or any other honours on a rich man whose source of wealth could be remotely described as questionable or ill-gotten. In most cases today, the reverse is the case.

- viii. The quality of leadership was much better. At all levels of society, only the best aspired to leadership positions. Today, leadership is even bought. The massive election rigging that seems to be the order of the day did not exist in those days, at least not at the present alarming scale. Leaders were largely selfless and committed. In most cases, they were motivated by a genuine desire to render selfless service to the people. This explains the establishment by the governments of the First Republic of the various agricultural programmes designed to feed the people, thereby eliminating the kind of abject poverty that we see around us today.
- ix. It was a much more humane society in all parts of the country. There was less repression, fewer human rights abuses, and therefore more stable, peaceful and happier societies generally. Although the ethnic factor has always been a feature of the social, political and economic lives of most African nations like Nigeria, ethnicity was not such a negative factor as it later became in the Nigerian environment after the civil war and beyond. It is possible that the relatively decentralized system of government under the regional arrangement, as well as the level of maturity and tolerance of the leadership of the first republic contributed to the reduced level of ethnic conflicts and the absence of religious conflicts. There was a much higher level of accountability on the part of the leadership and other public service officials. Salaries and wages

were paid on the traditional “pay days” and it was inconceivable to see a civil servant or worker not paid for two months or more as is quite common these days.

- x. Better management of resources: The nation’s resources were generally better managed than is the case today. Governments at Federal and Regional levels had stable economic policies. The nation practiced a high level of maintenance culture resulting in a limited level of national waste. It was an enviable era of healthy competition between the federating units, which worked out in the overall national interest.
- xi. The concept of unity in diversity was conceived during that period. At the national level, there was a good measure of unity in diversity despite the fact that each area retained its traditional cultural features. The political leaders seemed committed to preserving the unity and equality of the federating units so they did their best to retain all the basic features of true federalism without over-centralization of power. As a result, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Dr. M. I. Okpara and Chief Obafemi Awolowo preferred to function from their respective regional strongholds rather than at the centre. One of the greatest threats to the Nigerian federation today is the suppression of the basic concepts of true federalism.

These are some examples of the more positive features of the Nigerian state inherited from the leadership of the First Republic. It is unfortunate that these positive

achievements were blurred by the tragic political and ethnic rivalries that took place towards the end of 1965, leading to the unfortunate military intervention which set in motion a chain of events; several other coups and a very destructive civil war. Undoubtedly, the culture of violence and violent crimes, the increasing number of violent ethnic and religious clashes which did not exist, at least on a serious scale before and immediately after independence, coupled with the present low value attached to human lives, are all by-products of violent military coups, the public execution of armed robbers and the devastating torture and killings of innocent people during the tragic civil war. Nigeria would certainly have been a more humane society if its national psyche had been spared all this violence. Any positive effort directed at repairing this national damage and injury or any effort to restore the dignity and self respect of the human being is a step in the right direction. These are challenges that deserve the attention of the new God-driven selfless leaders that we hope will lead us to the promised land.

The First Military Intervention in Governance and the Fight against Corruption

This book is not about the first military intervention or an examination of the role of the military in government. Many other prolific writers, including some brilliant military officers, have written on various aspects of the subject. This book is primarily concerned with an examination of the main areas in which millions of Nigerians feel very badly hurt and betrayed by the leadership elite. Any reference to some historical factors such as the kind of society handed down to us by our founding fathers and the effect of the

first and subsequent interventions of the military in governance are only intended to lend relevance and validity to our primary theme. It is also expected that any such reference would help to highlight important historical issues that may have directly or indirectly contributed to the decline in our national values, resulting in the subsequent entrenchment of corruption in most aspects of our national life.

When the first military intervention in governance took place on January 15, 1966 in the form of the so-called “coup of the five majors”, it was, at first welcomed by Nigerians from most parts of the country. In the northern Region, some top civil servants were reported to have celebrated its success. In the East, Mid-West and Western regions, there was general merriment as most of the people believed that this military intervention would lead to the emergence of a new and better Nigeria that would be free from corruption, tribalism, and the different forms of political and social injustices that prevailed in the country’s body politics.

Many newspaper editorials praised the five Majors for staging the coup. At first, the five Majors were regarded as national heroes, but as time went on, people started questioning their motives for organizing the coup. Some accused them of acting as agents of certain politicians. Others suggested that the coup leaders were motivated by tribal considerations. It is possible that the coup leaders had their own strong political views, but available evidence seems to indicate that Major Nzeogwu and his colleagues were not motivated by tribal considerations, but by genuine patriotic feelings. They had embarked on what they expected would be a revolution to clean up the country and

produce a clean, viable and healthy society, and an honest government that would be national in outlook and acceptable to all the people of Nigeria. Unfortunately, despite their idealistic motives, the coup was brutal and bloody and seemed to have been mismanaged. Because the the coup of January 15, 1966 was violent, it could not have been welcomed by all Nigerians. In any event, some of the political and military leaders killed by the coup leaders also had their own followers and relatives in the country, who naturally resented the killings. They must have been the most vocal group that questioned the motives of the five Majors and their colleagues.

A detached examination of the facts conveys the impression that Nzeogwu and his colleagues were, in the words of Major-General Jemibewon, motivated “by the highest principle of patriotism.” In expressing his own views (and possibly the views of most military officers who knew Nzeogwu and his colleagues and their political philosophy), Major-General Jemibewon had this to say:

Speaking as a soldier who has had the unique opportunity of being aware of the state of events, I have no doubt in my mind that Nzeogwu and his colleagues were motivated by the highest principles of patriotism. There may be some truth in the suggestion that the young officers had been in consultation with certain political leaders who might have had their own selfish and personal ambitions and wished to use the officers to gain their ends. But I am convinced the officers themselves would never be a party to any scheme originating out of tribal or personal considerations. They may have been unwittingly used by unscrupulous politicians

without their knowing it, but they were fired by the love of their country and they were imbued with the highest sense of patriotism. There is no reason to doubt Major Nzeogwu when he informed the nation that the aim of the coup was 'to establish a strong, united and prosperous nation free from corruption and internal strife.... '

Jemibewon's conclusions are shared by many Nigerians, especially those who knew Nzeogwu. In spite of its bloody nature and its other adverse features, the average Nigerian welcomed the coup in its early days. Practically, all Nigerian newspapers wrote editorials and news features in support of the coup. The Federal Government-owned 'NIGERIAN MORNING POST' came out with an editorial in 'Pidgin English' in which it thanked God for producing the young officers who organized the coup to save the country and carried the news under the heading "Chop-chop don end, bribery don end."

In spite of their idealistic motives, Nzeogwu and his colleagues failed to achieve their objective, as subsequent events proved. Their action set in motion a chain of events which resulted in a bloody civil war and thirty years of military rule in Nigeria. Whatever the motives of the five Majors and their colleagues in staging the first Nigerian coup, the lessons we have learnt or should have learnt from that event, in the light of subsequent developments, is that in a multi-ethnic society, such as we have in Nigeria, nothing can be gained from violent military interventions in national politics, or indeed from civil wars and other violent ethnic conflicts. What is necessary in such situations is the capacity to embark on serious negotiations and discussions to arrive at decisions acceptable to the

various communities and interest groups that make up the nation.

Most well-meaning Nigerians agree that military intervention is not a solution to our political problems. Therefore, our objective in identifying those factors that lead to military intervention in African politics is to highlight them and their adverse consequences in order to deter our young military officers from embarking on such unnecessary military interventions in politics as a solution for national crisis situations. Whilst we condemn violent and unconstitutional military interventions, we also condemn those corrupt and unpatriotic activities, such as corrupt governance and election rigging that tend to encourage these military interventions. Whatever may be the rights and wrongs of the first military coup, its most unfortunate consequence was to have set in motion a chain of events that changed the history of Nigeria in a most tragic way; a destructive and worthless civil war that achieved nothing, thirty years of military rule, and massive corruption, the destruction of the concept of democracy and the rule of law, and the institutionalization of corruption and selfish leaderships in most aspects of the country's national life.

Even if we make allowance for the general belief that the young military officers responsible for the first military intervention in 1966 were genuinely patriotic officers who believed that they were acting in the overall national interest, they cannot escape being faulted for various errors of judgment. First, as intelligent military officers who decided to embark on this kind of dangerous and hazardous action in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria, they did not think through the likely consequences of the

serious assignment they were embarking on, especially as regards the following:

- (a) Its chances of success, and the likely effect of its violent, brutal and bloody nature on the relatively young Nigerian multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation.
- (b) Its likely traumatic effect on the nation's political stability, especially in a multi-ethnic nation that had not hitherto experienced such a national catastrophe. Had they been educated on the history of military intervention in other parts of the world, they would have known that however well intended, the chances of success in such circumstances were generally quite slim.
- (c) Whatever their motives, they were obviously not experienced enough to know that in a plural multi-ethnic society or indeed in any human society, wars and military interventions are hardly ever the answer and hardly ever produce the intended results.
- (d) As it turned out, their intervention failed to produce the better, more stable and more humane society free from corruption promised by Nzeogwu in his maiden national broadcast after the coup. Instead, it led to a most crippling civil war which destroyed practically all the nation's values resulting in a devastating level of corruption and poverty.

Surprisingly, when the civil war ended in January 1970, the country had virtually forgotten not only the issues that

had led to the first military intervention, but also the issues that resulted in the civil war.

In the light of the available evidence, it might be reasonable to conclude that the young soldiers who organized the first coup may have done so with good intentions to create a better Nigerian nation, but did not have the experience and the capacity to understand the complex nature of Nigeria and the fact that military interventions are not the best solutions for such complex national problems. Furthermore, they failed to realize that Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa's leadership style, his gentle, courteous and deliberative leadership style, operating under a parliamentary system in which he consulted freely with the council of ministers, was, certainly more conducive for the stability of Nigeria at that time. In the prevailing circumstances, the remedy provided by the young soldiers were not the appropriate solution. In faulting them, however, we accept that they acted on the basis of their training and limited experience, and like soldiers, they responded in the only language they understand and applied "military force" in which they were trained, to try to remove and resolve an unsatisfactory situation.

Although the first military intervention and all the subsequent military changes of government claimed that they were removing and replacing the previous administration in order to wipe out corruption, this declaration, in practically all cases, was never achieved by the succeeding administrations. In some cases, the situation got even worse in that the leadership that took over tended to become more involved in corruption and corrupt activities than the one they had removed. Mostly the succeeding regime would start their official duties with

a series of probes and commissions of enquiry into the misdeeds of their predecessor and as soon as they settle down, everything became quiet as matters returned to business as usual. The prayer of the patriotic Nigerian is that some day, **“God will give Nigeria the Saviour and leadership that will save the country from further decline and disintegration;”** many ordinary Nigerians are confident that God will respond to this prayer one day!



CHAPTER 11



THE ADVENT OF THE NIGERIAN DELINQUENTS

The title and theme of this chapter raises some serious questions: who are these irresponsible and selfish delinquents that have continued to disrupt and impede the nation's progress and development by their actions? How did they originate and when were they first identified? Why were they allowed to continue to inflict so much injury on the collective interests of millions of decent and well-meaning Nigerians? Why did we accept systems and laws that have allowed some of these reckless and selfish individuals to invade the country's leadership class at various levels of our society? We shall attempt to answer these questions as we proceed.

Unfortunately, our research efforts did not reveal the exact origin of these delinquents, but it was evident from our findings that they represent a small, noisy and highly

visible percentage of Nigerians. This small group of delinquent Nigerians, from all backgrounds and ethnic groups, have over the years been responsible for the decline in the country's traditional values. Their generally negative activities became more pronounced after the Nigerian civil war in the 1970's and beyond. Although very few writers have written specifically about the delinquents as such, several writers and commentators have spoken and written about the havoc caused by this small group of reckless Nigerians and the damage they have done to the Nigeria image, as well as their negative influence on the Nigerian youth.

Dr. Pius N. C. Okigbo, of blessed memory, was an eminent Nigerian statesman, a great scholar, philosopher and an internationally acclaimed economist. About thirty years ago, Dr. Pius Okigbo graciously wrote the foreword to my book: *Nigeria at the Crossroads: A Nation in Transition*, published by Witherbys in London. In that foreword, Dr. Okigbo remarked that I had shared with my friends and contemporaries "a troubled vision of Nigeria", arising from the problems created for our otherwise beautiful country by these Nigerian delinquents, confirming that most of Nigeria's problems are man-made. Surprisingly, what Dr. Okigbo said in this foreword about the Nigerian society and the delinquents, thirty years ago, is still valid even in present-day Nigeria. Since there are important lessons to be learnt from Dr. Okigbo's observations, we reproduce the Foreword in part as follows:

This book, a commentary on Nigeria by an eminent Nigerian, is like a guided tour. Mr. J. O. Irukwu takes us through the family, love, marriage, life and death; culture in its various manifestations; the evolution

of the present political system and its institutions; the growth of the economy, and the organization required for the future of the society. The approach is panoramic, the feeling deep and sustained, the style lucid and elegant.

It is difficult to read this book without sharing the author's anguish about the present trends in the Nigerian society. And the author is young enough not to be classified among the older generation that tends to condemn the current generation. His anguish is not from a nostalgia for the "good old days" but for a criticism levelled at his own contemporaries; a criticism inspired by knowledge that, with her rich endowments in natural resources, manpower and culture, Nigeria has immense possibilities for greatness which are not being fully realized.

Each society creates its institutions around some central core values. Our indigenous institutions of family, hierarchies, religion, culture, political organization, justice, etc., were created around a set of values aimed at social cohesion and stability. Under British rule and missionary influence, new institutions were brought in. Nigeria adopted them but the values they represented have not, in all cases, been fully accepted or fully integrated with the indigenous set of values. The consequence of this ambivalence has been disastrous for the indigenous concept of family, social security, justice, authority and statecraft.

Mr. Irukwu's view of the Nigerian society is not new. Indeed, each generation of post-independence rulers has decried the moral decadence, the degradation of values, and the social disease that seem to afflict our

modern society. They have all, from Ironsi to Gowon to Murtala Mohammed to Obasanjo and recently President Shagari, joined the religious and moral leaders in pointing to a singular danger, when an individual dies, the society buries him; but that when a society itself dies, the result is general putrefaction. It is this contingency that has inspired this charming, sober but disturbing book. However, Mr. Irukwu's thesis is founded on hope that the society can still be saved. The route lies in the emergence of a leadership marked less by rhetoric and shibboleths than by example, by discipline (at work and at leisure), by integrity (intellectual and moral), patriotism, justice and freedom. The pillars are to be found in an upright and courageous judiciary and a forthright and responsible press.

Mr. Irukwu is so well placed to write this book on Nigeria. Relatively young, outstanding in his profession, he shares with some of his contemporaries a troubled vision of contemporary Nigeria. The call for reform is urgent. Each of us carries an Athanasius in him. If Mr. Irukwu's book shakes our leaders out of their complacency and inspire them and their followers to greater discipline, it shall have more than fulfilled its purpose..."

This message contained in Dr, Okigbo's foreword was given over thirty years ago in 1981. It has been reproduced because of its great value and relevance in our present context, particularly as regards the problems inflicted on Nigeria by the delinquents, especially now that some of them are invading the country's leadership circles. According to Dr. Okigbo, the great philosopher and economist, "when an individual dies, the society buries

him; but when the society itself dies, the result is general putrefaction.” When Dr. Okigbo died a few years ago, we gave him a befitting burial. We hope our leadership elite and the good people of Nigerian will not allow the delinquents and their collaborators to kill our society and the nation; to spare us the catastrophe of confronting general putrefaction. This is one of the primary objectives of the present book, which we are producing as our contribution to the celebration of our centenary this year.

As regards the exact origin of the delinquents, it would be reasonable to conclude, on the basis of the evidence available to us, that even if we cannot pin-point the exact origin of the delinquents, we do know that they were well established during the early 1980s as evidenced in chapter 8 of our book, *Nigeria at the Crossroads*. The relevant sections are reproduced almost verbatim as follows:

The Problem of the Nigerian Delinquents

The Nigerian delinquent is the greatest social nuisance that exists in the country. The day the country is rid of its delinquents, Nigeria will become a paradise on earth. Who is the Nigerian delinquent? And how does he operate? By definition, a delinquent is a disorderly person who consistently fails to carry out the duties and obligations he owes to his society. In the eyes of the law, he is an offender since he does not do what the law requires him to do. Sometimes the delinquent person commits minor offences which are not serious crimes, and at other times he commits serious crimes. Every society and every country has its own share of this group of persons which accounts for the use of the legal term “juvenile delinquency” describing the whole subject of the commission of crimes by children and young persons.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian delinquent is a special breed and most of the time, he is not a child or a young person. Although the country also has its share of juvenile delinquents, most of the havoc in the society is caused by the adult delinquent. No account of the Nigerian society would be complete without some reference to this group of Nigerians. They come from every social level, the unemployed, the low-income group, the middle and upper classes, but they all have one thing in common; their high degree of irresponsibility, recklessness and total disregards for customs, law and order. It would not be correct to describe the Nigerian delinquents as really mad or insane, but some of the worst cases get close to serious forms of insanity. No one has taken an accurate census of the delinquents in Nigeria but one thing is certain, they represent a large percentage of the country's population. According to Professor John Ebie, one of Nigeria's leading psychiatrists, there are 16 million men and women in Nigeria suffering from varying degrees of mental illness. It would therefore be reasonable to conclude that at least 10 million of these are delinquents of varying degrees of recklessness and irresponsibility in the country and most of them are to be found in the big cities.

What are the main characteristics of these unusual citizens? What do they enjoy doing and how do they differ from normal citizens? The first point of distinction is in the area of law and order. What distinguishes the delinquent from the good Nigerian is the former's total disregard for law and order. As soon as a new law is enacted, the delinquents' proceed to explore how to break that law and get away scot-free. Discovering loopholes in the law and possible

escape clauses is one of the hobbies of the more sophisticated delinquent who may be a successful professional or businessman or both. The less sophisticated delinquents will attack the law more crudely by indulging in acts of vandalism, destruction and stealing of property and sometimes armed robbery of different types of property.

As a motorist, the Nigerian delinquent is a terror and a great bully on the highways. He drives with complete disregard for the Highway Code and the road traffic laws. To say that his driving is reckless and dangerous would be an understatement. He can make a "U-turn" on an expressway and, if necessary, stop in the centre of the road on a busy street either to answer nature's call or to chat with a friend he has not seen for some time. The fact that he is holding up traffic, including an ambulance does not worry him. Another delinquent, in a hurry to nowhere may alight from his own car to question the first offender who is holding up traffic and this could lead to a fight which would then hold up all traffic on that road for the rest of the day.

In most orderly societies, people form a queue at the post office to buy stamps or register letters, or to board an aircraft, but the Nigerian delinquent does not believe in queuing – for him it is a case of the survival of the fittest. Unfortunately, in this respect, most normal Nigerians are delinquents when it comes to boarding an aircraft and this also includes practically all the foreigners living in Nigeria who sometimes tend to out-do the Nigerians in fighting their way into and out of aircrafts in the local departure and arrival terminals.

In a letter published in "THE PUNCH" newspaper of July 24, 1981, a highly respected Nigerian, Chief (Mrs.) K. A. Pratt, painted a vivid picture of the problems of travelling by the national airline as a result of the combined activities of the delinquent airline officials and their collaborators. Under the heading "Agonies of travelling Nigeria Airways" Chief (Mrs.) Pratt made the point that because of the activities of these delinquent airline officials, the possession of an O.K. ticket means nothing and that arriving in time and being No. 1 in the queue is not an assurance that you can get a boarding pass! Better still, you can come in late as the final announcement for boarding is being made and get your luggage checked in while you race to the departure lounge....." She further made the point that a situation in which 200 boarding passes are issued to passengers for an aircraft that has only 150 seats is not good management and urged the airline authorities to do something positive to stop this degrading state of affairs at our airports "before we are turned into animals tearing each other to bits in order to board an aircraft and enjoy a service for which we have paid." She further suggested that Government should break the monopoly enjoyed by the airline, by granting licences to private airlines so as to introduce an element of competition which would make the airline service in Nigeria more efficient. (Luckily this plea achieved the desired objective as we now have private airlines).

An important area in which the delinquent has excelled is in the area of noise making. When he plays his records, he makes sure all the neighbors are compelled to 'enjoy' his new collections whether they

like it or not. When he gives a private party to celebrate the death of his grandfather, he makes sure that at least two streets and two lanes are closed to all traffic so that the visitors who cannot be accommodated indoors may indulge themselves on the streets. If he is not sufficiently influential to get away with closing the street to all traffic, he will just content himself with hiring two juju bands to play at the same time so that between them they will produce enough noise to silence all those in the neighborhood.

A High Court declared in a leading case on nuisance that ordinary Nigerians are by custom and tradition very noisy people. If the ordinary Nigerian is noisy, the Nigerian delinquent is extremely noisy, and he does his noise making with total disregard for the feelings and interests of others.

In ancient times, Nigerians of different ethnic groups were generally clean people; sanitation and simple hygiene were accepted as proper things to do and practice. Since the sanitary inspectors disappeared from our society shortly after independence, most Nigerian cities are a mixture of a few clean areas and a lot of filth and squalor in most areas with plenty of abandoned, expanding refuse dumps in front of residential areas. The present-day Nigerian delinquent has no regard for sanitation. He litters the streets at will, and in some cases, the major streets have been converted to toilets by these reckless citizens.

The Nigerian delinquent thrives on confusion. The moment he finds himself in an orderly environment, he spares no effort in creating a lot of confusion in the place. If he is employed in an office, he will see to it that the office ends up in confusion; if he is

appointed to the board of a thriving company, he must see to it that there is confusion all around so as to create an opportunity for him to loot the company or weaken its productivity since this might lead to more confusion.

In his 1981 Easter sermon, the Anglican Bishop of Enugu, the Right Reverend Gideon Otubelu, identified some of the ills which plague the modern Nigerian society as covetousness, selfishness, ethnicity, the get-rich-quick mania, lies, hate, slanders, divisions, violence, armed robbery and other forms of violent crimes. In that sermon, His Lordship appealed to all Nigerians to make a fresh start in order to build a better Nigerian society in which these social ills could not exist. I wonder how many of the Nigerian delinquents, especially those of them in the middle and upper classes, are prepared to take the Bishop's Easter message seriously. In addition to the sins and vices listed above in the Bishop's Easter message, gossip, rumour mongering and the spreading of false and malicious stories and the character assassination of good people are the major hobbies of the Nigerian delinquent. For reasons of fear of retaliatory attack, the delinquent does not discredit or lie against other delinquents; instead he would rather attack and discredit the better members of the society. That explains why so many good but weak persons in Nigeria have either died prematurely or have sometimes retired prematurely from public life out of frustration arising from injuries inflicted on them by the delinquents either physically or emotionally.

The Nigerian delinquent has done a lot of harm to the image of Nigeria both at home and abroad. The

student delinquent cheats at examinations and instead of studying to pass an examination, he either buys or sells question papers. When he applies to a foreign university, he sends fake results presenting credits he does not possess. When his fraud is discovered, this is held against all Nigerians, including the many good Nigerians. As a businessman or as a traveller, he deliberately buys or sells forged bank drafts and travelers' cheques from fellow delinquents and when he is arrested in Paris or New York, the image of the good Nigerian suffers also. There are quite a few Nigerian delinquents in foreign prisons having been arrested on charges of carrying Indian hemp and other drugs.

The Nigerian delinquent has abused, exploited and prostituted every Nigerian institution, including the religious and sacred. Because he knows that the average Nigerian is highly religious and ritualistic, he has set up fake churches which have been used to exploit the weak and those who are emotionally disturbed. Some of these delinquent priests and prophets have used the name of God to entice wives from husbands and children from their parents. They have used undue influence to extort money and other types of property from their weak victims. The result is that apart from the old and established churches, one is unable to sort out the good from the bad amongst the many churches and spiritual and religious sects that now spring up daily.

Nigeria operates a mixed economy made up of private and public state owned corporations such as the banks, insurance companies, oil corporations and the Nigerian railways amongst others. From time to time, a few Nigerian delinquents manage to get

appointed as managers, directors and sometimes, even chief executives and chairmen of these important public corporations. As a manager of these vital economic institutions, the Nigerian delinquent does everything except manage the organization efficiently, and as a director, he misdirects the organization. Where the delinquent succeeds in begging or lobbying his way to the office of director or chairman of the board of one of these public corporations, the first thing he does is to identify all the possible ways in which he can exploit the organization and its resources for his own benefit. As chairman, instead of seeing that meetings are conducted in an orderly manner, he creates disorder and confusion, and will use his position and influence to bend and break all rules and laws that have been made to ensure the success and efficiency of the organization. Any courageous official or director who is bold enough to disagree with the chairman's method is marked out for elimination or destruction, especially if the delinquent chairman happens also to be an "influential" citizen.

Undoubtedly, the failure of many state owned companies can be attributed to the activities of the delinquent chairmen, directors and managers who have found their way into these institutions; in many cases these delinquents tend to advance the interest of these enterprises only when their personal interest coincides with that of the organizations.

As in many other institutions, the financial institutions also have their own delinquents at staff, management and board levels. Most of the fraud in banks and insurance companies are perpetrated directly or indirectly by the in-house delinquents in these institutions, and they are responsible for the

bad public image of some of these finance houses. The delinquent insurance manager will connive with claimants to make fraudulent claims on his company. As an insurance proprietor, the delinquent would set up a fake "mushroom" insurance company, collect premiums from the public and go into hiding when the claims start rolling in so as to evade the payment of legitimate claims.

There are quite a few delinquents also in the professional classes. Although Nigeria can boast of a large number of first-class and highly dedicated professionals such as doctors, lawyers, judges, engineers and so on, the country nevertheless harbours quite a few delinquents in these top professional groups. There are delinquent doctors who will issue sick certificates to perfectly healthy employees for a fee, or issue a fake death certificate in order to facilitate the collection of a fraudulent death claim on a life policy. The delinquent doctor will do everything to make money and hardly practices medicine in the correct manner. The delinquent lawyer has done a lot of harm to the Nigerian society. As a magistrate or judge, he allows his judgment to be corruptly influenced by extraneous factors. He deliberately distorts or fails to record the evidence in court in order to ensure that his wrong judgment is not upset by appeal to a superior court. As a practicing lawyer, he collects fees from a client then fails to appear in court to defend the client and will act in breach of all professional ethics and the code of conduct of the legal profession. He helps in frustrating the judicial process and encourages the breaking of laws by helping clients to find loopholes in the law.

The most dangerous delinquent is the one who occupies a leadership position in industry, government,

politics, commerce and other professions. His bad examples have the effect of creating new delinquents among the younger members of the Nigerian society.

Nigerians are great lovers of power and influence, and the Nigerian delinquent is an expert in the abuse and misuse of power whether it is religious power, political power, Naira or bottom power. The Nigerian delinquent, rather than use his power and influence to promote the welfare of his members, will use it either to inflict harm on or to exploit the weaker members of the society. Whenever necessary, he will use his power and influence to cover up his crimes and misdemeanours.

The delinquent in the Nigerian Civil Service is in a class of his own. As in most developing countries, the civil service in Nigeria has a lot of power and influence since it has the primary duty of executing government programmes and projects. The civil servant therefore is in a powerful position and can frustrate government efforts if he chooses to. Nigeria certainly has a lot of efficient and reliable civil servants, but as is to be expected, there are also delinquents in the civil service. This class has been responsible for most of the criticism made against the Civil Service. The delinquent civil servant is lazy, disorderly and dishonest. He will not perform his duties unless he has been bribed to do so.

In the Civil Service, every important subject has a file, and no action will be taken unless the file on the subject is available and has been studied. Because the delinquent civil servant realizes the importance of files, one of his main instruments for creating havoc is the file, which he may steal, destroy or hide at will,

depending on what he wants to achieve. When he is "paid", the file will be produced. If you dare to question his authority or to complain about his misbehavior, the file will either disappear forever or be burnt. The prayer of every Nigerian who has business to do with government is that God should spare him from the delinquent civil servant! Most people solve this problem with the Naira, by ensuring that the delinquent Nigerian civil servant is adequately bribed to take the desired action. But is this really a solution?

The delinquent policeman is about the worst that has happened to law and order in the country. He is simply a terror. Under normal conditions, a policeman is a peace officer employed to enforce law and order, but the Nigerian delinquent in the police force does the exact opposite. He is disorderly and corrupt and instead of enforcing law and order, he either breaks it himself or encourages others to do so. Instead of the criminal being dealt with by the delinquent policeman, the criminals never get apprehended or punished for their crimes. As in most developing societies, the relationship between the Nigerian public and the police is not always cordial, and although the police authorities and government are doing everything possible to improve on relationship between the police and the public, the delinquent is doing everything possible to ensure that they fail. When on duty, the delinquent policeman does everything except his police duties. He makes himself an enemy of law abiding citizens and a friend to criminals and vagabonds. At checkpoints where it is his duty to counter the criminal activities of some bad elements in the society, instead of apprehending

the criminals, he will shoot at and attack innocent citizens at the slightest provocation.

No good citizen of Nigeria cares to encounter the delinquent policeman on desk duty at the police station; he is not likely to be paid any attention and may spend several hours there, before his case is heard. Many people are afraid to exercise their civic right to report criminal activity or apprehend criminals, as the delinquent officers at the police station might turn all evidence against the good citizen and arrest him instead.

Nigeria has, on the whole, a good police force which does its best to carry out its difficult responsibilities, frequently under adverse conditions and restricted by a shortage of manpower and equipment; a good number of the senior police officers and other ranks are dedicated to their duties, unfortunately however, the presence and activities of the Nigerian delinquent in the police force, thwarts their efforts.

As a businessman, the Nigerian delinquent is fraudulent and unreliable in all his activities. For him, deceit is a way of life; he breaks his promises and cheques issued by him are rarely honoured by the bank. The delinquent engaged in the import and export business will almost invariably specialize in the importation of all those items banned or prohibited by the government. He brings these items into the country by bribing the custom officials. In a statement contained in the March 1981 issue of the Nigerian BIZNEWS, Chief T. A. Odutola, President of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, complained about the social and economic problems which the country has been facing as a result of the

criminal activities of these delinquent Nigerians in the following words:

"We of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria view with grave concern the apparent inability of the appropriate authorities to reduce to the barest minimum the instances of armed robbery resulting in physical injuries, deaths and loss of properties in our homes, factories and highways..."

He continued:

"Cars are snatched daily, workers' salaries are hijacked, residential and business premises are attacked and looted, ships are attacked by pirates, etc. The result of this is that manufacturers, who should concern themselves primarily with high productivity, spend an inordinate amount of time and money correcting the inadequacies of the law enforcement agencies. It is not unusual, despite this deplorable state of affairs, for some police commands to refuse all forms of assistance from well meaning and responsible groups to supplement their efforts. We view with grave concern the fact that almost every single item the importation of which is banned is sold openly on major streets in towns all over Nigeria without regard for our law and before the eyes of customs officials. I need not elaborate on the damage to the economy caused by the present level of smuggling which has now reached alarming proportions in this country..."

Chief Odutola, who is a highly respected Nigerian industrialist concluded his address by appealing to government to take steps to protect law abiding citizens from the activities of this disorderly group. Most people share Chief Odutola's concern. It is the wish of all good Nigerians that everything possible

should be done to put an end to the activities of the delinquents in our society if they cannot be reformed and turned into better citizens. In addition to measures aimed at curbing their activities, there should be law enforcement against these delinquents so that in the not so distant future the number of these delinquents will be reduced from the staggering 10 million in 1980 to a more manageable number.

It is true that every society has its own delinquents, and Nigeria is not alone in this respect, but in most modern countries, delinquents are mainly children and young persons, whereas in our case, we also have adult delinquents, some of whom are parents occupying important positions at different levels of our society. While it may be a lot easier to tackle the problem of the juvenile delinquents, dealing with the problem of these adult delinquents, who may be wielding a lot of power and influence and, in some cases, enjoying the admiration of sections of the community, is much more complex. In a situation where the father or guardian is an adult delinquent as described above, what right has he to complain about his juvenile delinquent son or daughter, and what hope is there then for the reformation of the juvenile delinquent?

The Delinquent versus the Good Nigerian

Inspite of the havoc created by our society's delinquents, not all Nigerians are delinquents; there are still millions of good, law-abiding citizens, who by their actions, help to make Nigeria a decent place to live in.

They are the ones who make it possible for Nigerians to claim the title 'the hope of the black man' and 'Africa's

great nation'. They pay the taxes that help to keep the machinery of government functioning and they generate the wealth that makes Nigeria great and produce the food that keeps the people going. All their actions are in alignment with the tradition, customs, norms and laws of the Nigerian society, and they are to be found in both the rural and urban areas.

As a matter of fact, some of the best and generally simple and unspoilt Nigerians are based in the rural areas and the traditional Nigerian societies. These people in the rural areas account for more than 60% of the Nigerian population. They live very simple lives, close to nature, and their lives are not polluted by the complexities and problems associated with life in the city. They are generally honest and sincere and attach great value to such virtues as hard work, industry, reliability, simplicity and moderation. They never over-indulge and their lives and total existence revolve around their families, their religion and their immediate rural societies. They do not believe in either 'Naira Power' or 'Bottom Power' and they are generally shocked by reports of the actions of delinquents, some of which they find difficult to believe. Although these groups of Nigerians have not had the exposure of travel to foreign lands, they nevertheless are broadminded and generally quite hospitable to foreign and indigenous visitors to their rural environments. In spite of the fact that most of them have not had the privilege of western academic education, they believe in the value of knowledge and education and encourage their children and other relatives to pursue their studies seriously so as to obtain the best that western education can offer. Despite his commitment to his family and to the development of his

rural community, the good Nigerian in the rural area is not usually tribalistic. He believes in the principle of 'live and let live' and shares the concept of one united Nigeria in which all the people of Nigeria can live in peace and harmony irrespective of their ethnic and religious differences.

The point made above about the good people of Nigeria in the rural areas is not meant to imply that all urban Nigerians are evil – far from it. As a matter of fact, the good Nigerians in the urban areas are just as good as their rural counterparts except that they live in completely different environments. Unlike the rural dwellers, those in the cities are generally more sophisticated in the western sense and they include some highly qualified professionals, industrialists and business men and women who are honest, hardworking and law abiding citizens.

The problems created by the delinquents tend to make life difficult for the average Nigerian who wants to live a virtuous and disciplined life. The patriotic Nigerian is constantly under pressure from several quarters to give in to the temptation of corruption; only the most determined and courageous citizens are able to withstand this. For example, a decent law-abiding citizen holding an important position is constantly pressurised by his friends and extended family to adopt corrupt behaviour in order to satisfy their selfish desires. Unless he is strong-willed and courageous, he may find himself being forced to succumb to these temptations.

One other negative feature of the modern Nigerian society which deserves special mention in the present context is the tendency of the society to breed cynicism; this is harmful to the interests and aspirations of all well -

meaning Nigerians. This cynicism is manifested in different forms, but its overall effect is to create and sustain a general loss of faith in things Nigerian, to the detriment of both the economy and our national pride. It breeds social evils such as smuggling, unemployment, tax evasion and other unpatriotic acts.

The primary responsibility for the development of this cynical attitude to matters in present day Nigeria rests squarely on the shoulders of the Nigerian delinquents as described in this chapter. As a direct result of the evil activities of the delinquents, the average Nigerian seems to be losing faith in his country and its people. Undoubtedly, it is this prevailing cynicism and pessimism in our society that is responsible for the tendency in some quarters to label all Nigerians as corrupt. As a matter of fact, a few responsible Nigerians have been heard to declare publicly that most Nigerians are corrupt, although they concede that there might be a sprinkling of one or two good Nigerians here and there.

Of course we know that all Nigerians are not corrupt. The people who make such exaggerated generalizations do so as a protest against their unpleasant experience in the hands of these delinquents. In spite of their notorious activities, the truth still remains that there are fewer delinquents than law-abiding citizens. If it seems that the delinquents outnumber the rest of the population, it is only because of the tremendous havoc they have wreaked on the social equilibrium, coupled with the fact that they overwhelm the majority of Nigerians with their loud, aggressive behaviour and their conspicuous presence in all walks of life.

Another direct effect of the cynicism and pessimism which is becoming evident in present-day Nigeria is the

general feeling of mistrust on the part of the overall society which makes it difficult for individuals to recognize, appreciate and encourage its good people. Because of this unfortunate negative attitude, most Nigerians tend to be suspicious of others. For example, the good Nigerian employed in an organization in which bribery is rampant and who refuses to join his colleagues in their corrupt practices is sometimes treated as an outcast and not as an asset to his society, and the chances are that he might be marked down for elimination rather than commendation. Those of his colleagues who have sufficient interest in him may tell him that it is in his own interest to join the bandwagon and toe the line, usually, with the warning that "there is no room for angels or saints in present-day Nigeria." The poor fellow, if he is weak, may have to give in and join his colleagues, and once again, another good Nigerian is lost to the delinquents.

It is not enough to identify the cause or causes of this increasing cynicism in our society or to point out the various ways in which it manifests itself. Something positive must be done by our leaders, sociologists, the political elite and all well-meaning Nigerians to repair the damage. Some cynics complain that these social problems are not being solved because Nigeria lacks dedicated, selfless and honest leaders. Nigeria, like most other countries, may have some selfish and dishonest persons in leadership positions, but it also has a number of first class leaders. As a matter of fact, judging by the standards and norms of modern Nigeria, a few of our leaders have given to our society much more than the society is entitled to expect from them. Our problem in this regard is that the Nigerian society tends to make it difficult for these leaders

to maintain honest, dedicated selfless behaviour . In many instances, the basic process of electing or choosing the leader is based on a foundation of corruption. A good and obvious example is where the leaders in a parliamentary election is forced to bribe the voters to vote for him. What right has such an electorate got to question the actions of its leaders who only got elected into the state or national assembly because he was able to offer the highest bribes in cash or kind to the electorate?

When a prospective leader has been compelled to distribute a substantial sum of money among voters in his constituency, for say, election into parliament, it is only natural that on assuming office he seeks to obtain contracts and to abuse the power of his position in various ways, in order to recoup the amount he has paid to the electorate; and also to accumulate sufficient funds for the next election, so as to perpetuate his position. Unless leaders are elected strictly on merit by their constituencies, without demanding financial rewards for doing so, the electorate has no right to demand any form of accountability from the leaders that they elect. Many otherwise good Nigerian leaders have succumbed to the corrupt demands of their various constituencies, as this was the only means through which they could have the opportunity to serve their people. To appease their own consciences, such leaders claim that they can only effect positive change by being an integral part of the political power system; since this cannot be achieved by avoiding the corruption of the electorate, it is better to err on the wrong side with a view to achieving the greater good for the benefit of the people. Whether they do, in fact, eventually produce any positive change , is a debatable point.

It has been said that every community creates the kind of society it wants. If we want a clean society, good in all respects, we must be led by honest and selfless people, who will lead by their good example. This means that no delinquent should be elevated to leadership positions in the kind of decent society that we are aspiring to.

Attempts by Nigerian Governments to Address the Problem of the Delinquents

It is on record that some Nigerian administrations have made various unsuccessful efforts to address the problem of the Nigerian delinquents, as well as to acknowledge the decline in our moral standards and values. The first such government effort was made by the Shagari Administration when the Federal government set up a 16-member National Ethical Revolution Committee with a view to determining how best to resolve this chronic national problem. In September, 1982, President Shagari's Ethical revolution concept was accepted by the National Council of States and a sixteen-member National Ethical Re-orientation Committee comprising of traditional rulers, religious and trade union leaders was appointed; their task being to determine the causes of the high level of social and civic indiscipline, to save the country from moral decay and to formulate and submit appropriate recommendations. The committee's terms of reference required it to:

1. Determine the impact of such ramification upon the society and the economy;
2. Recommend measures, immediate and long term, for reversing the present trend and eliminating

from the society the negative effect of this moral decay.

3. Examine traditional institutions, customs, values, habits, traditions of the people with a view to identifying and recommending those in tune with the country's social and economic objectives and to examine any other connected issues and make recommendations.

As was expected, most Nigerians did not believe that this serious national problem could be resolved by this Committee, and the media virtually wrote it off as yet another government propaganda which would soon be forgotten. The mood of the people at that time was reflected in The National Concord newspaper in its "Thinking Corner" of 25/9/82, which had this to say:

First it was Public Complaints Bureau followed by the Code of Conduct Bureau and now the Ethical Revolution Committee. But, a better approach is implied in the children's play song "Follow the leader..."

When those in public offices stop believing in their own propaganda hogwash and start bringing accountability into public life, only then would they hope to get the people's support for whatever 'revolution' they initiate. For now the revolution clarion call is too hollow except as a media event to be seen and forgotten.

The Daily Times in its editorial opinion on the same date (25/9/82), commented on the subject in similar vein, and maintained that the ethical revolution concept will only

succeed if the political elite resolve to make it a success since “to a very high degree the moral tone of the society is dictated by the political elite....”

Undoubtedly, the success of any political programme depends on the commitment and support of the political leadership at that material time. However, judging by President Shagari’s track records and humane disposition, as well as the background and quality of the individual members of the Ethical Reorientation Committee that he had selected, it would be reasonable to believe that the Shagari Administration genuinely wanted to ensure the success of the assignment given to this committee. Unfortunately, the absence of the necessary political will and the overthrow of the Shagari Administration in a military coup ensured the failure of this project, and consequently, the problem of the delinquents and the prevailing national indiscipline continued. Thereafter, the decline in moral standards continued preparing the ground for the invasion of the country’s leadership by some smart members of this troublesome group, as we will see from the next chapter.

Thirty Years After, What Happened?

What you have just read about the Nigerian delinquents was contained in Chapter 8 of my book on Nigeria referred to earlier, written in 1981. Unfortunately, there has been no positive change in thirty years. All informed Nigerians know that the Ethical Revolution conceived by President Shagari never really took off, as his administration was prematurely removed from office in another of the many military coups recorded in Nigeria’s chequered political history.

As the country moved from one political crisis to another, the only real change that occurred was a very negative one. The Nigerian delinquents, especially the “smart” ones amongst them, decided that their activities would yield more “profits” for them if they infiltrated the leadership circles. In the process, they gradually and systematically studied the Nigerian society. As soon as they had built up enough financial resources, they proceeded to invade the country’s leadership at Federal, State and Local government levels aided by the wealth and Naira power they had accumulated from their dubious and reckless illegal activities.

The introduction of the democratic civilian political process in 1999, with our foundation of election rigging and political thuggery, turned out to be just ideal for the well equipped delinquent with political ambitions. This untidy political situation naturally facilitated their invasion of the country’s political leadership at local government, state and federal levels as well as other national and traditional institutions.

Their financial power and mastery of the weaknesses of the post-civil war Nigerian society made their invasion and their recruitment of collaborators a lot easier. As all this was going on, the good Nigerian watched helplessly. The few who dared to challenge the delinquents and their collaborators were either silenced or assassinated. In this setting, the process of invasion of the country’s leadership by the delinquents became easy to accomplish and has continued to flourish, sometimes using more subtle but nevertheless effective methods, to the detriment of the collective national goal and objectives.



CHAPTER 12



THE INVASION OF NIGERIA'S LEADERSHIP BY DELINQUENTS

The delinquents as described earlier did not exist before the civil war or during the period of the First Republic, certainly not on such a large scale as to constitute a national problem. In those early days, the societal disorder and national upheaval created by this group did not exist. At that time, the international image of Nigeria was as good as that of the most respectable nations of the modern world. Leadership was a serious and respectable matter, and only the best aspired to leadership positions at all levels of society in national, private and public institutions. Money, as such, was not a factor in the selection of leaders; character, background, integrity and a capacity to provide visionary and selfless leadership were the main

considerations. All this changed when the delinquents appeared on the scene. As will become evident in this chapter, the prevailing national insecurity and abuse, the massive scale of corruption at all levels of society, the existing infrastructural deficiencies, the presence of abject poverty in the midst of plenty, and the generally agreed leadership failure are all consequences of this invasion.

Corruption existed in Nigeria before the delinquents appeared on the scene, but their emergence and subsequent invasion of the country's leadership amplified the problem. Nigerians, including the leadership elite, have written and spoken so much on corruption and its negative effect on the nation's progress and development. If the problem could have been solved by rhetoric alone, it would have disappeared by now. Practically every Nigerian leader, military or civilian, has, in the past 30 years or more, condemned the disastrous effect of corruption on the country's stability and development. Even some of the more ingenious of the delinquents have vigorously condemned corruption in appropriate circumstances. From all indications, the wars against corruption will last as long as the good people of Nigeria allow the delinquents to maintain a dominant hold on the country's leadership. As long as their influence and dominance continues, the war against corruption will exist only in theory and in words, without any concrete achievement.

The delinquents, especially the more prominent and successful ones, are not fools; they have a perfect understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the present Nigerian society. They fully recognize the average Nigerian's love for money and influence and will continue

to exploit this to achieve their objectives, including hiring the best professionals and other 'experts' to ensure that their invasion is not disturbed in any way and that nothing is allowed to weaken their hold on people.

Another consequence of the invasion of the leadership by these delinquents is the migration of needed human capital to other, mostly Western, countries. Nigerians in the diaspora, now account for a substantial percentage of the effective workforce of many of these countries; this is a big loss to the nation.

It is up to the good people of Nigeria and the few committed leaders to devise constructive methods of dealing effectively with this problem in the interest of national progress and stability. Poverty and its eradication is a major factor in the war against corruption. We all know from what we can see around us that a poor man will do anything to guarantee at least two square meals a day for himself and his family. Therefore, any genuine war against corruption must seriously address the issue of poverty alleviation, not just the kind of 'political' and rhetorical poverty alleviation that we have witnessed over the years.

Delinquents Undermine the Participation of Respectable Nigerians in Leadership Matters

The fact that the vast majority of respectable Nigerians have watched helplessly and allowed the delinquents to invade the country's leadership does not mean that Nigeria is not blessed with a reasonable number of decent and responsible citizens, with world class leadership credentials to occupy leadership positions. What most

discerning Nigerians are unhappy about is that this situation has been allowed to degenerate to the extent that the delinquents are able to use their ill-gotten money, sometimes under the cover of ethnic and sectional protection, to buy their way into leadership positions, giving rise to a multitude of negative consequences.

Undoubtedly, the presence of delinquents in leadership positions has had the effect of discouraging decent and respectable Nigerians from being involved in political and other leadership matters. As a direct consequence of this situation, the country is deprived of the benefits and advantages of qualitative leadership. To further their objectives in this context, the delinquents do their best to propagate and promote the impression that politics is a "jungle" not meant for decent and respectable citizens. In the process, those responsible citizens with political interests, whose lives were not directly threatened or who were not warned to "keep off", often end up being intimidated by the crude and brutal methods adopted by the invading delinquents. Others become frustrated and deterred by the massive corruption and financial demands of the system, and once again we are deprived of decent leadership by a system baldly dominated and fueled by these delinquents.

In any decent society aspiring to establish an efficient and durable political culture, no genuine leader, ready to be of selfless service to his people, who has earned his money from honest hardwork, would be prepared to pay several millions of his hard-earned money to an electorate, to win a political position. The only person who would

not hesitate to pay is the delinquent aspirant who is, in effect, 'investing' money he will recover many times over when he assumes office. Part of the solution which has been suggested to this particular Nigerian problem, is that Nigerians should pressurize the political leadership and government to devise durable methods for making the political and public service environment attractive to decent and responsible citizens who genuinely desire to give selfless leadership service, while making it unattractive to delinquents, whose main objective is to exploit the system in furtherance of their own selfish interests.

Character Assassination as a Weapon of Intimidation

Another weapon which the delinquents use to deter respectable citizens from disturbing their dominance of the country's leadership is character assassination. As a general rule, the delinquent has neither character nor reputation, but he is quite adept at tarnishing the image of those who have a reputation to protect. When a respectable and reputable person decides to make some inroads into the country's political space or other important leadership area that may weaken the delinquents' hold on the system, the general trend is for the delinquents to mobilize and to stop at nothing, including violent attacks and assassinations to discourage the respectable Nigerians from pursuing their interests in such political leadership positions. Since they know that respectable Nigerians value their reputation, they generally channel their attacks in that direction, most times in collaboration with their agents in the media.

Under these pressures, most decent Nigerians surrender to pressure from friends and family, who usually remind the responsible victim that he does not have what it takes to survive in the 'dirty political jungle' dominated by the invading delinquents; and so, Nigeria is once again deprived of qualitative leadership. From all accounts, only tough and dogged well-meaning Nigerians manage to bypass these delinquents and their antics. The situation would have been worse without the determination of such good and daring political figures, but nevertheless, we still cannot get the best out of such people, without cleaning up the system and making it more efficient, reliable and durable. In any event, we hope that the number of daring Nigerians who are able to challenge and defy the delinquents and their threats will continue to increase and multiply.

Delinquent Leadership and the Looting of the National Treasuries

It would probably be correct to state that the constantly reported systematic looting of the nation's treasuries had started before the emergence of the present generation of delinquents. However, the general belief is that one of the consequences of the invasion of the country's leadership by delinquents is an alarming increase in these lootings. It is widely agreed that a major tragedy that has impeded the development of the Nigerian state is the massive looting of the nation's treasuries by those placed in leadership positions. For several years, this matter has been of great concern, to Nigerians and the international community. It has affected the attitude of the international community in negotiations for aid and other concessions to Nigeria. Any situation that has the effect of increasing

this problem should be resisted by all well-meaning Nigerians.

A recent United Nations or World Bank official estimate puts the amount looted and siphoned out of the country by Nigerian leaders in the past thirty years, at a staggering figure of \$400 billion. Other sources have put the figure in the region of \$600 billion and more. One of the consequences of the emergence of delinquents and their invasion of the country's leadership has been to further escalate this problem as a result of their direct and indirect selfish exploitation of the system. Any sane, sober and reasonable person, who takes the time and trouble to reflect on this phenomenon and the vast amounts of money involved, would have no difficulty in concluding that only delinquents who are totally ignorant of the value of money and the meaning of leadership, could embark on such reckless actions.

In any event, our research reveals that no well-meaning Nigerian of conscience and integrity would loot the peoples' treasuries entrusted to their care. Only a delinquent can commit such acts without any sense of guilt or regret. As we reflect on the huge sums involved in these reported cases, it becomes evident that Nigeria might have made great progress, in developmental terms, if these looted resources, most of which were stacked away and sometimes lost in foreign banks, had been invested in the development of the country. The good news is that in recent years, with the help of the international community, some of the stolen funds located in foreign banks have been recovered.

From all accounts, millions of respectable Nigerians, including the poverty-stricken masses expect that the

process of recovery embarked upon in recent years and the punishing of the identified looters, will be pursued with commitment and sincerity; in accordance with the relevant laws in the overall national interest, as a deterrent to others who may be contemplating such actions. To do otherwise or to 'politicize' the matter, as is being suggested in some media reports, would be seen by posterity in the same context as the activities of those who committed the original act of looting. Naturally, history, posterity and God will judge such 'cover up' actions appropriately.

When we consider the acute level of poverty in the country, the tragic degeneration of practically all the nation's infrastructural facilities, roads, railways, hospitals, health and educational institutions, we can well imagine the difference to development these vast amounts would have made. It is in this context that we should view the great damage done by those who inflicted such permanent injuries on their own people and the painful tragedy of a system that installs such delinquent leadership in the first place.

The Failure of Leadership

This is one major subject on which Nigerians, including some members of the leadership elite, generally agree. Most Nigerians maintain that the country has witnessed a depressing level of leadership failure, which has had the devastating effect of slowing down the country's development, despite all its universally acknowledged resources. This leadership failure and its negative consequences are directly traceable to the notorious

activities of the delinquents in influential leadership positions. These consequences are numerous, as evidenced by the views of a number of eminent Nigerians mentioned in this text and others documented in other publications by several distinguished writers on the subject. They all agree that poor leadership has had destructive consequences on this potentially great African nation, which clearly has the capacity to become a major world power, if its resources are better deployed by selfless and committed leaders of vision and integrity.

However, all hope is not lost. It is said that when a problem is identified and acknowledged, the solution is more or less quite close. The position today, as gathered from our recent research and media reports, is that most Nigerians, including former and present members of the leadership elite, now realize that there has been a failure of leadership in most aspects of the country's national life. Some of the more recent reports actually mention such former leaders as President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and a former military leader, General Yakubu Gowon (who, incidentally, was never accused of corruption and the looting of state funds whilst he was in office) as having publicly condemned both the Nigerian military and civilian political leadership elite for having failed the nation in this context. These are positive developments which seem to indicate that we are in the process of seriously addressing these leadership failures.

In an editorial comment published on page 18 of *THIS DAY* newspaper of April 21, 2008, under the title: *FAILURE OF NIGERIAN LEADERSHIP*, this issue of leadership failure is described as Nigeria's basic problem which has negatively affected the stability, progress and development

of the country; retarding Nigeria's social and economic growth despite its abundant human and natural resources. The editorial which appeared to be speaking for all Nigerians, after lamenting extensively on the failure of leadership, both military and civilian, proceeded to describe poor leadership as "the root of all the country's problems from corruption to insecurity, acute poverty, bad roads, poor infrastructural facilities, endless economic depression and the prevailing militancy in the Niger Delta." The editorial ended with a question: "WILL THERE BE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL?" Our answer to this question is that the solution lies in good leadership and the ability of the people to clean up the system, in addition to ridding the leadership arena of delinquents, their agents and collaborators who have contributed in no small measure to the tarnishing of the country's image.

The Negative Role of Money in Politics

Another negative consequence of the invasion of Nigeria's leadership by the delinquents is the widespread abuse and misuse of money, especially in the pursuit of misguided political interests and ambitions. Many well-meaning Nigerians have condemned this tragic development which deters good people from active participation in the nation's politics. This attitude to money is impeding the establishment of a decent and durable culture of democracy. This point was made in an interview given by Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Former Secretary- General of the Commonwealth, published in the Sunday Independence of June 22, 2008. In that interview, Chief Anyaoku stated in part as follows:

"The fundamentals of democratic governance are still lacking while money politics is taking precedence over a credible electoral process that could lead to free and fair elections in Nigeria. The problem is that the culture of democracy is not yet here. At present, our process is still ridden with corruption. Corruption that induces people to choose those who would govern them, not on the basis of merit, not on the basis of capability but on the basis of money. Money is playing too much a role in our politics and as long as the culture that worships money is there, we will remain unable to freely and fairly choose those who would govern us..."

In response to the question as to why he had refused to contest for Nigeria's presidency in 2007, Chief Emeka Anyaoku confirmed that although several political parties had wanted to adopt him as their presidential candidate, he had decided to remain non-partisan:

"I was very consistent in saying that I do not think that I would want to leave my experience at the disposal of my country on a partisan basis. To contest the election would have meant my joining a political party and I decided when I left office to return home not to be involved in party politics.... Nigeria is full of people who should govern us well. Unfortunately, we are still in a number of problems that are mainly man made, but I am hopeful for the future... the fundamental of democracy is that people should freely and fairly choose who governs them, who governs them in the legislature, who governs them in the executive, we have not yet attained the level

of free and fair choice, and that is why I believe that President YarAdua's decision establishing a panel to examine our electoral system is a very sound initiative. Because at the root of our problem is that we are yet to be able to freely and fairly choose those who govern us..."

On the politics of Anambra State, which has remained volatile since the return of democratic rule in 1999, Anyaoku, a prominent indigene of the state wondered, like many others, why a state that has produced internationally acclaimed professionals in all fields of human endeavor, including the first President of Nigeria (late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe), should lag behind in political and socio-economic development. He, however, blamed this paradox on the lack of proper understanding of the true meaning of politics by Nigerian politicians who engage in money politics instead of politics of ideas and policy. He added: "Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher wrote that 'man is by nature a political animal.' He did not mean that every man and woman is, or should be a politician and certainly not in what is increasingly becoming the Nigerian sense of politician. In its true meaning, politics involves a set of ideas and activities concerned with acquisition and exercise of governmental authority. And the authority, if it is to acquire legitimacy must have as its aim the pursuit of the common good. There is ample evidence that politics in Anambra state has fallen far short of true politics and that pursuit of the public good is still far from being attained. The truth is that politics in Anambra state, since Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999 has not been about ideas; rather, it has been dominated by an

unremitting and often reckless pursuit of power and positions for personal aggrandizement ... Serious advocacy is needed in the churches, mosques and schools for true understanding of democratic principles and the sanctity of elections if Nigeria's 'democracy is to survive.'"

CHAPTER 13

THE CASE FOR A UNITED
AND STABLE NIGERIA

This chapter was inspired by a public lecture delivered by this author under the auspices of the Arewa Consultative Forum in Kaduna in 2003, and it raises some relevant questions which include the following:

- (a) Why is it necessary for us to work towards a united, peaceful and stable Nigerian nation?
- (b) What are the factors that threaten the Unity, Peace and Stability of Nigeria and how can they be eliminated?
- (c) How can we, as individuals, leaders and governments contribute to the achievement of the desired national objectives?

- (d) In pursuit of the desired national objectives, what are the vital lessons that we have learnt in the past century which may have some relevance on our theme?

We will start by addressing some of the vital lessons of the 20th Century.

Some Lessons from the 20th Century

History is primarily a story or an account of past events. The world attaches great importance to historical studies because of the lessons we can learn from historical events. Guided by such lessons, we are able to avoid past mistakes that resulted in disastrous consequences. Unfortunately, history continues to repeat itself because we tend to ignore the lessons of history. Trusting that we will be guided by the historical lessons from the 20th century, especially in the context of our theme, I have listed a few example below:

From the events of the 20th century we have learnt the following lessons:

- (i) That conflicts, wars and civil disorders hardly ever resolve national or societal problems. On the contrary, such conflicts were generally resolved through discussion and negotiation in a sincere spirit of give and take with genuine compromise.
- (ii) That where there is a will, there is always a way.
- (iii) That the truth always prevails.
- (iv) That the countries that achieved political stability, economic progress and overall prosperity during the 20th century were those whose leaders were honest, sincere and selflessly committed to the

pursuit of the well-being of all their people and whose governments and democratic institutions were allowed to function freely and efficiently in the best interest of their people under the rule of law.

- (v) That the few multi-ethnic and multi-religious developing nations that progressed in the 20th century, free from such destructive features as ethnic conflicts, civil wars, and disintegration were those whose leaders and their followers had exhibited a high degree of maturity, vision, unity, peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and tolerance amongst the different groups that make up the nation state.
- (vi) That there are no shortcuts to individual, corporate and national greatness. Those individuals, corporate bodies and nations that achieved greatness, national prosperity, peace, unity and stability did so as a result of their determination, hardwork and commitment to these goals.
- (vii) That it is difficult for democracy to survive in an environment with a high level of poverty, political and social instability, absence of the rule of law or one in which the civil society is not reasonably secure economically.
- (viii) Another important lesson is that only citizens of nations that offer their nationals reasonable security, as well as a general sense of self esteem and well being, possess the high level of patriotism and motivation that inspires higher national productivity and economic prosperity.

Nigeria's Main Characteristics as a Potentially Great Nation

Since our theme is centred around the Nigerian nation, it should serve as a solid foundation on which to rest our case as we begin to examine, very briefly, the main characteristics of modern Nigeria, which have led many of us to the conclusion that Nigeria is a potentially great nation and should be nurtured and developed to play a great role as a world power.

In many respects, Nigeria is one of the most fortunate countries in the family of developing nations of the world. Her vast endowments of assorted natural and human resources and her strategic geographical and political location on the African continent makes Nigeria to stand out as a potentially great African nation; if Nigerians and their leaders could agree to live in peace and unity and work collectively towards the attainment of the greatness that has been virtually thrust on the nation by providence. Nigeria as a political entity, came into formal legal existence on October 1, 1960 when the country achieved full political independence from Great Britain. Before the arrival of the British and long before colonisation, the territory now known as Nigeria had existed with its many states, kingdoms and peoples as far back as the pre-historic era of Africa for well over 5,000 years.

Limited Industrial Activity Before and After Independence

Before independence, there was very little industrial activity in Nigeria as the country was primarily involved in agriculture, general trading, and assorted commercial

activities. In those pre-independence days, the economy, which was predominantly centred around the purchasing and exportation of raw materials and the importation and distribution of goods and services, was dominated by British and other European trading companies. Following the achievement of political independence in 1960, Nigerian Governments at Federal and Regional levels, became actively involved in the promotion of industrialisation. They also encouraged Nigerians to become involved in the establishment of industrial projects. This government intervention, coupled with the growth of the country's oil revenue, led to the expansion of the national economy and the establishment of several small and medium-sized industrial projects. Since independence, practically all Nigerian governments have consistently adopted policies aimed at promoting the process of industrialisation and the encouragement of economic growth with varying degrees of success.

The Strategic Importance of Nigeria in Africa

It has been said that Nigeria is to Africa what China is to the World. This is probably because Nigeria is the largest market on the continent, as well as the most highly endowed with both human and natural resources. Its strategic importance also rests on the fact that it is the World's 10th largest producer of oil and petroleum which now accounts for almost 90% of the country's foreign exports and 80% of its foreign earnings, contrary to the position in the 1960s, when agriculture and food products accounted for 70% of Nigeria's exports. Apart from petroleum, the country is rich in practically all the valuable mineral resources known to mankind such as gold, silver,

coal, tin, columbite, lead-zinc, marble, graphite and iron ore to mention just a few. Undoubtedly, Nigeria's strategic political, economic and geographical location, its abundant natural and human resources, as well as the largest democracy in Africa puts it in a very special position. This is further enhanced by its key role in the ECOWAS sub-region with its membership of 16 countries at different levels of development.

Abundant Supply of Manpower

At the risk of committing a repetition, I must state that one of Nigeria's greatest strengths is its abundant supply of highly skilled manpower, including outstanding world-class scientists, technologists and professionals in practically all disciplines. There is hardly any country in the world in which we do not find highly skilled Nigerians playing key roles in their own areas of specialisation. If we are able to create the right environment at home that would propel these highly talented Nigerian experts to return and help in transforming our own institutions, the result would certainly be overwhelming.

I have deliberately highlighted some of Nigeria's positive features in order to indicate its great potentials, and the need for all Nigerians to work collectively to eliminate those negative features that weaken or threaten the Nigerian structure. Having listed some of our priceless natural and human resources, it is my submission, that we all have a sacred duty, as patriotic Nigerians, to protect, improve and preserve these resources that it has pleased God to bless this nation with. This is probably an appropriate point to pay special tributes to our founding fathers in the hope that their spirit will propel us to become

more committed to the preservation of our natural resources and endowments.

A TRIBUTE TO OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

As we reflect on the recent past and celebrate our centenary, it would be appropriate to pay a special tribute to the founding fathers of modern Nigeria, notably, The Right Honourable Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Great Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardana of Sokoto, the illustrious Chief Obafemi Awolowo; The Right Honourable Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa; the illustrious Dr M.I. Okpara, the distinguished Chief S.L. Akintola. Other great leaders in this group include Mallam Aminu Kano, Chief J.S. Tarka, Chief Dennis Osadebey and several others now deceased, who made it possible for Nigeria to achieve its political independence from Great Britain on a “platter of gold”; without the pre-independence civil commotion and agitation witnessed by countries like Jomo Kenyatta’s Kenya during the Mau Mau conflicts. As we salute these departed national heroes, we should remember them for their maturity, wisdom, vision, tolerance and selfless leadership qualities which helped to preserve our unity and national integrity in those early days of our nationhood. May their souls rest in perfect peace. It is also to their eternal credit that the prevailing decline in our value system did not take place during their time.

Undoubtedly, the prevailing “Money Worship” syndrome, irrespective of how the money was acquired, would not have been tolerated during their time. Today, even illiterate Nigerians know that the figures 419 refer to a crime associated with Nigeria nationally and internationally as a result of the nefarious activities of some

of our bad eggs. In the days of our founding fathers, the term “419” was only familiar to lawyers and policemen who recognised them as referring to a section of the Criminal Code which deals with serious fraudulent crimes for which the few perpetrators were punished, ostracised and shunned by society as dubious characters who were regarded as outcasts even by their families. Today, they are sometimes celebrated and given special titles, honours and awards. Furthermore, during those early days under the leadership of our founding fathers, Nigerians were respected internationally. It was rare to find a Nigerian convicted abroad for any kind of fraudulent act and the country was rated as a respectable country to do business with. Today, ‘Transparency International’ classifies Nigeria amongst the most corrupt nations. As we address the solutions to these tragic developments, it should be helpful to find out what went wrong. In a recent newspaper interview, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, in response to a question from the media as to where we went wrong as a nation, declared that we went wrong when we “enthroned mediocrity” to take over the country’s leadership, contrary to the position in the days of our founding fathers. This subject should be seriously addressed as part of our national reformation exercise.

The Need to Eliminate the Divisive Elements

It is certainly not our intention to castigate ourselves or to run down any groups or leaders. On the contrary, we intend to build bridges of friendship, goodwill and understanding. We also know that it is not our intention to paint false and glowing pictures of the state of our nation. The compromise lies in admitting the truth and working out ways and

means of cleaning out our society and resolving our problems to facilitate our search for durable peace, unity and stability.

Having mentioned some of our endowments and strengths as a nation, it is only reasonable to mention some of our weaknesses as they are perceived by the ordinary Nigerian and by the international community since we cannot escape from the fact that we are part of the one world concept.

In a recent public lecture, a respectable Nigerian, Prince Julius Adelus-Adeluyi, opened his address in part as follows:

"In today's Nigeria, there are tales of woe wherever you turn. People dying on pension queues, threats to the security of life and limb; decaying infrastructure, threats of chaos economically and politically. And the litany goes on. Some Nigerians are so desperate that they are prepared to try any other alternative, no matter how extreme or crazy- including selling Nigeria back to Britain, since, as they reason, the good old colonial days bring up a sense of nostalgia...."

"When I told a friend that I was going to Abuja to speak on grass root insurance, he chuckled and suggested sarcastically that it would be better to speak on how the price of garri could be insured and fixed at a level that the grass root can afford, instead of speaking on Grass root insurance... I remain one of the optimistic Nigerians who continue to preach hope..."

That was a patriotic Nigerian giving the ordinary Nigerians perception of the status of today's environment.

The international community knows that Nigeria is one of the most highly endowed nations in the world. With a population of over 140 million, it is the world's tenth largest country and one of the most strategic nations of the world. At one stage during the 1970s, it was the wealthiest country in Africa. Unfortunately, as a result of several years of uncontrolled waste, indiscipline and corruption, coupled with unrestrained consumption, mismanagement of resources, corporate irresponsibility and poor governance, the country witnessed a tragic decay of all its institutions as well as the worst form of poverty and economic depression. The result is that we have, for many years, been living in a difficult social and economic environment which has adversely affected the growth of our national economy. In less than 30 years, between the 1970's and the 1990's, Nigeria rapidly declined socially and economically, moving from the status of being Africa's richest nation to becoming one of the poorest nations of the world, despite all its abundant resources.

Commenting on this national tragedy, Karl Maier, a London writer, who is said to be sympathetic to the Nigerian situation, in his recent book with the title *"This House has Fallen"* stated that Nigeria cannot claim to be a developing country in the same sense as the Asian developing nations, sometimes described as the "Asian Tigers". He maintained that at best, today's Nigeria can only be described as an under-developed or under-developing nation. To further buttress his point, he stated in part as follows: "Its people are far worse off now than they were 30 years ago. The numbers speak for themselves. Despite some \$280 billion in export revenues since the discovery of oil in the late 1950s, at least half of all

Nigerians live in abject poverty, without access to clean water.... Gross domestic products per person are lower now than it was before the beginning of the oil boom of the 1970s. To even return to the living standards of that time, the economy would have to grow by an unlikely 5 percent per year until 2010. The value of the national currency has fallen from \$2 to the Naira, to one penny per Naira. The foreign debt stands at \$32 billion. The World Bank ranks Nigeria as the thirteenth poorest country in the world. The 1999 United Nations human development index gives it a slightly better, though disheartening score, 146 out of 174."

As a patriotic Nigerian, one would like to counter the above assertions. Unfortunately, in the face of the overwhelming evidence, it is difficult to do so convincingly. To further compound Nigerian's social and economic problems, the country has witnessed over the years not only the adverse effects of unstable governments, but also the economic consequences of erratic economic policies founded on selfish and sectional interests either in their conception or execution, with little regard for national interest.

One of the negative consequences of this poor social and economic environment is the effect it has had on our national psyche and value system, resulting in the invention by the cynic of the unfortunate phenomenon generally described as the so called "Nigerian factor". This term, which has been applied to practically all aspects of our national life, is used in a derogatory and cynical manner to describe the negative consequences or fall-out of the adverse features associated with the decline in the country's value system such as gross acts of indiscipline,

fraudulent acts or acts of injustice and deceit in all spheres of society or other negative societal behavior patterns.

Can these negative features be removed? Is it possible to return our value system to the situation in the good old days of our founding fathers?

All difficulties can be overcome if they are converted to opportunities and challenges and tackled positively with determination and commitment. Most of the country's problems are man-made. They were created by the people, mostly as a result of our individual and collective indiscipline, neglect and greed. As pollution created by human-beings, this can be removed if everyone, the leadership and the people, resolve, with sincerity, determination and commitment to do so.

The fact that we now speak openly about our national problems with everyone complaining that the deplorable situation must improve, is a very positive sign. It is an indication that we are ready to welcome a change for the better. Our previous half-hearted attempts at societal cleansing failed because the leadership did not inspire much confidence in the people. The people did not see positive signs of sincerity and commitment on the part of the leaders in their declared pursuit of the cleansing exercise. In most cases, the leaders failed to show signs of leadership by example. A largely cynical society like the Nigerian one, brutalised and traumatised during several decades of exploitation and abuse of their trust by their leadership, would not believe any leader who merely announces that he is in business to fight indiscipline, greed and corruption, when they see that the leader's household, trusted friends and close associates are fathers, mothers,

sons and daughters of indiscipline, greed and corruption. Furthermore, in the few cases where the cleansing exercise was executed to the point of sanctions against offenders, it was generally seen by the people as having been done selectively, either against individuals with whom the leadership had some personal score to settle, or against targeted groups, whilst serious offenders in the special groups were spared. As a result, the people were generally reluctant to join in such ill-founded cleansing exercises. Hopefully, by God's grace, these negative features will be eliminated as a result of our present collective efforts.

How to Ensure a Peaceful, United and Stable Nation

We have examined the positive and negative aspects of the Nigerian society in order to paint a vivid picture of our strengths and weaknesses as a modern nation state. From all accounts, one of our fundamental challenges is the building of a modern nation state with a truly Nigerian national interest as opposed to ethnic, sectional, zonal or regional interests. Despite all our difficulties, some of which have been identified in this text, I am confident that this desired objective is achievable. As a starting point, we should devise methods and strategies that will guarantee the achievement of a peaceful, united and stable Nigeria. Conferences and seminars attended by Nigerians from all parts of the country, are all positive signs. They show that we are ready to take the bull by the horns as we work towards the attainment of the desired national objectives. Other positive factors that will promote and sustain unity, peace and stability in Nigeria include the following:-

- (a) We should embark on a positive and sincere process of national reconciliation so as to restore

confidence amongst our various regional, zonal and ethnic nationalities. If properly handled, this would have the effect of reducing or eliminating the growing ethnic and other conflicts that have become rampant in recent times.

- (b) Education is a major tool for the development of human capital which is the foundation for unity, peace and stability. Planned investments in qualitative mass education are essential for achieving the desired objectives.
- (c) We should discourage our people, especially the leaders, from taking actions or making statements and publications that are of a provocative and divisive nature. To this end, we should, as a matter of national corporate policy, begin to emphasize those things that unite rather than those that divide us.
- (d) We should enthrone a culture of justice, fair play and equity in the management of our national affairs and in the distribution of our resources so that every Nigerian, irrespective of his tribe, status or religion, would feel a total sense of belonging.
- (e) Earlier in this chapter, we identified some valuable lessons of the 20th century that are relevant to our kind of plural society. It is clearly in our overall interest to allow these lessons to guide and influence our individual, corporate and national activities, decisions and relationships.
- (f) In our type of developing country, democracy and the rule of law are very useful allies in the

promotion and preservation of national stability, unity, peace, law and order. We should therefore always remember that the surest way to incite anarchy, disunity and instability is to disturb the efficiency and integrity of our democratic institutions or to attack or disturb the operation of the concept of the rule of law.

- (g) It may sound basic, but such mundane and seemingly insignificant matters as simple as good manners, courtesy and respect for the culture and institutions of others play vital roles in the promotion of social stability, unity and peace in our kind of sensitive environment.

Despite our numerous social and economic problems and the complex and plural nature of our society, it is my submission that Nigeria is capable of overcoming its problems, if only we can borrow from the experience of other equally plural societies. The USA is a good example of a complex plural society with diverse cultural and ethnic nationalities that has managed to achieve and sustain the status of a prosperous, peaceful, united and stable society despite its diverse culture and complex disposition. There are of course other such examples in different parts of the world. They were able to achieve such harmonious national cohesion because the leadership of the various interest groups in the countries concerned had the vision, wisdom and understanding to get together and work out acceptable arrangements that guaranteed their unity, peace and the aspirations of the different groups in their country. As Nigerians, we have so much to gain from a viable, stable, united and peaceful Nigerian nation that enjoys the respect

of the international community and the patriotic loyalty of individual Nigerians. There is therefore no reason why we should not work towards the achievement of such a positive national objective, borrowing a leaf from such countries as the USA and others like them.

Being an incurable optimist, please permit me to end on an optimistic note. Although we have several divisive and negative factors that threaten our unity and national stability to the extent that some well-meaning Nigerians have, in recent times, expressed serious doubt concerning our ability to survive, I remain convinced that we will overcome these problems as most Nigerians would like us to stay together as one nation founded on justice, equity and fair play under the rule of law. We have the capacity and resources to convert our present problems and difficulties to challenges which should propel us to the national greatness that we desire. As stated above, the starting point in our determination to eliminate these divisive factors, in my view, is that we should urgently embark on a serious and sincere process of national reconciliation in which our governments, the various ethnic organizations such as the Arewa, Ohaneze, Afenifere and others described by Honourable Justice Mamman Nasir in a conversation as 'SUPER NGOs', should play positive unifying roles. In my book on *Corporate Responsibility*, I made a passionate plea for a genuine and sincere national reconciliation exercise as one of the best ways of healing our national wounds. Such an exercise would certainly advance our search for stability, lasting peace, prosperity and durable democracy in Nigeria. I would like to repeat this plea as we embark on the celebration of our centenary. We should set the ball rolling

by encouraging our leaders, at all levels of society, to support the concept of a genuine national reconciliation and to do so sincerely.

A Positive Role for Our Ethnic Nationalities

In a thought-provoking article published in the Guardian of 1st January 2002 under the title, 'Leadership and the failed Nigerian nation state,' Dr. Festus Iyayi of the Association for Good Governance and Productive Leadership, raised a number of issues, in effect questioning the success of the Nigerian nation- state. Some of the issues raised in that article make it imperative for us to support the concept of national reconciliation which should include discussions on how best to heal the wounds of the past which have threatened our national stability at various times. Whilst suggesting that the various ethnic organizations are, in effect, threats to a Nigerian national identity, the article also gave the impression that instead of commitment to the Nigerian nation-state, most Nigerians now prefer to defend their citizenship rights and the basis of their participation in Nigeria on the ethnic platform. The relevant section of that article reads in part as follows:

The major basis for defining citizenship right and participation in Nigeria today is the ethnic platform. Thus we have the Afenifere for the Yoruba, the Arewa for the Hausa-Fulani and the Ohaneze for the Igbo. The ethnic minorities are also organized in parallel platforms: these are the Middle Belt forum, the Ijaw National Youths Congress, the south-south forum, and so on and so forth. Even at the state and local council levels, the individual's identity is defined by

the primordial ethnic group to which he or she belongs. In the process, the idea of a Nigerian identity and of a Nigeria nation-state not only feel and become remote, they do not become the basis for individual participation, calculation and action. Rather, the basis for these is provided by the ethnic groups to which the individual belongs. The same phenomenon repeats itself at different levels of the nation-state and local council levels as an individual's identity is defined either in terms of ethnicity, clan or town and village community origins. The net effect is that several decades after independence in 1960, Nigerians do not experience a true sense of shared national identity."

Even if we do not totally agree with these statements, they are nevertheless serious observations shared by many Nigerians, which we cannot afford to ignore. As a matter of fact, the issues raised in this article, lead one to the conclusion that our various ethnic or sectional organizations or the 'SUPER NGOs' as they have been rightly called, should be mobilized and encouraged to play key roles in the reconciliation project. Such a genuine and sincere exercise should commence with our recognition of the mistakes of the past, followed by appropriate steps to avoid further repetition. Ethnic and sectional organizations are products of today's Nigerian environment and they should be utilized to build bridges of understanding and peace. This is what I tried to do when I was elected President General of Ohaneze Ndigbo in 2003.

For the purpose of necessary emphasis, may I respectfully state once again that all these ethnic and sectional organizations are products of today's Nigerian

environment. We should begin to utilize them to build bridges of understanding and peace.

In any event, many well-meaning Nigerians do not subscribe to the view that the ethnic and sectional organizations, such as the Arewa, Ohaneze, Afenifere, Union of Niger Delta, Middle Belt Forum and others like them are opposed to the Nigerian nation-state concept as such. My understanding is that most of them, whilst protecting and advancing the basic interests that they represent, are also committed to the preservation and promotion of Nigerian national interest in the context of the peculiar circumstances of today's Nigerian environment. Ohaneze, for example, is fully committed to the concept of one united, peaceful and stable Nigerian nation founded on equality, justice, equity and fair play. As an organization, it respects the right and interests of all other sectional or ethnic associations with the same philosophy. This is why one of its ideological pillars is founded on the old Igbo adage, *Egbe Belu, Ugo Belu*, which, translated literally, means 'let the hawk perch and let the eagle also perch.' This ultimately translates to '**Justice for all.**' We have no reason to doubt that other SUPER NGOs such as Arewa, Afenifere and others are similarly committed. If that is the case, it is important that we create a society that is visibly equitable and fair to all the various ethnic nationalities. Such a just and equitable society will diminish the need for undue attachment, by individual Nigerians to their sectional or ethnic associations, thereby strengthening their attachment to the Nigerian nation because of the solid protection, opportunity, peace, unity and security that it offers to all citizens irrespective of their background and circumstances. Until then, we should

continue to utilize the strengths and resources of the ethnic associations to protect and advance the best interests of all Nigerians irrespective of their ethnic or religious dispositions.



CHAPTER 14



THE PRIMACY OF PATRIOTISM

In the context of nation building, we have learnt from experience that one of the greatest problems in the building of a modern nation out of a multi-ethnic developing African country is the availability and identification of political leaders that have the vision, capacity, patriotism and political will to place the overall national interest above all other considerations; even when such national interests seem to be in conflict with their own limited ethnic or sectional interests. The general scarcity of such nationally patriotic leaders has been a major impediment to nation building in Africa, especially in post-colonial multi-ethnic African nations.

Unfortunately, despite the sincere efforts of the early nationalists and the founding fathers of modern Nigeria, we have not been spared this problem. Undoubtedly, the absence of genuinely transparent commitment to the

concept of the Nigerian nation by some of the political leadership elite has had negative effects on the development of a truly Nigerian national spirit. It has also been a great impediment to the building of the Nigerian nation, despite all the political rhetoric that flows from the political elite at appropriate moments. Unless this trend is reversed, the Nigerian dream will continue to be a mere illusion.

In simple language, a patriot is someone who passionately loves his fatherland to the extent the he is always ready and willing to sacrifice everything to protect, promote and advance his country's collective national interest, as against personal or sectional interests. The national interest should always be the one interest that is overwhelming in the overall interest of all Nigerians, because it is based on equity, fairness and justice for all. Patriotism demands the highest level of passionate loyalty, nationalism and commitment to the national cause in a most selfless manner. Everyone who aspires to national leadership in politics and all other national leadership positions in any modern nation should be motivated by this passionate spirit of nationalism and patriotism; if we really mean business.

Despite the facts of history and the origin of Nigeria as a creation of colonial administration, we believe that so much has happened in the past fifty years of political independence that Nigerians and the political leadership should have evolved a system that would have positively reconciled the various ethnic interests, resulting in greater bonds of national unity and patriotic devotion to the Nigerian nation, a nation acceptable to all Nigerians as their fatherland due to the protection and opportunities

that it offers them, irrespective of their ethnic or sectional orientation. From all accounts, these seemingly conflicting interests can and should be reconciled in a spirit of give and take, if we are to fully earn the collective benefits of being citizens of a large country that has all the strategic potentials of Nigeria in today's highly competitive world environment.

The starting point is that we should eliminate those divisive factors that have consistently been identified as impediments to the country's development, we should focus on the building of structures, systems and political arrangements that guarantee national cohesion, stability, peace and unity; while eliminating areas of friction that destabilize the various groups and their interests. Under the right political atmosphere, a genuine democratic system under the rule of law would certainly produce leaders who are firmly committed to the concepts of patriotism and nationalism in the widest possible context. We certainly require and deserve a high level of patriotism, commitment and nationalism if we are to achieve our collective dreams in this context. To say that at present most Nigerians think first of their ethnic and sectional origins before the Nigerian nation is stating the obvious.

Leaders Should Set the Tone for National Unity

In most decent human societies, leaders generally lead by the examples they set for their followers. In the interest of peace, unity and national cohesion, leaders are expected to avoid divisive action and bring communities together in the pursuit of the common good.

While we were writing this chapter, two important, instructive, relevant and topical national events occurred. These events had to do with the anniversary of the death of two eminent Nigerians, namely Chief M.K.O. Abiola, former presidential candidate of the famous June 12 Presidential election fame and General Sani Abacha, former Military Head of State. The two events dominated the national media for several weeks with accounts of the historical lessons that came out of them. From all the comments on these events, it is evident that they will continue to be recorded by posterity and historians as part of modern Nigeria's chequered political history and major landmarks in the country's struggle for democracy and the rule of law. In the Abacha case, the story carried by the media had, in effect, alleged that three of the country's former military Heads of State had distorted the country's history by absolving Abacha of any wrongdoing by stating publicly that he "served Nigeria well" and that "he did not loot the treasury"... See the *GUARDIAN* and *THIS DAY* Newspaper of 9th June, 2008 and *THE NATION* of 10th June, 2008. The national reaction that followed these media reports was summed up in an editorial comment on page 19 of *THIS DAY* Newspaper of 16th June 2008, which reads in part as follows:

Considering this hypothetical question: would Nigerians have forgiven the late Gen. Sani Abacha if, supposing he is still alive, he had returned all the money he was accused of stealing from the national coffers and publicly apologized? Even as he is dead now, would we have given him a post-humous pardon if his family and friends had returned the loot and asked Nigerians to forgive him? Probably. Just

probably. But what do we make of the recent stance of his family and friends who not only refuse to beg Nigerians for forgiveness on behalf of the late dictator but are also trying to rewrite history by insisting publicly that Abacha never stole a dime from the nation's treasury while he was in the saddle between 1993 and 1998?

Barely a week after the widow of the late head of state put up a spirited defense of her husband's sanctity, three of his former military colleagues who are also former heads of state joined in the shameful show of mendacity by denying that Abacha ever looted the national treasury.

At the 10th prayer session for the late head of state in Kano penultimate Sunday, the trio of Generals Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida and Abdusalami Abubakar exonerated Abacha of all allegations of looting the national treasury, saying there is no basis for accusing him of corruption. This is against popular opinion and contrary to proven evidence of recorded loot from Swiss and other foreign banks lodged by the late dictator.

The stance of Abacha's widow is understandable, even if not plausible. For it is in the nature of all dutiful spouses to always be supportive and defensive of their partners, dead or alive. But what we find objectionable is for former leaders, who should have known better, to publicly defend somebody who has been proven to have committed economic crimes against the country.

Where were these former heads of state when the last administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was striking deals with the Swiss authorities for the return of funds looted by Abacha, which were stashed in

Swiss banks? Obasanjo's spirited efforts led to the repatriation of more than \$500 million of the \$2 Billion Abacha loot to the country by Switzerland, as disclosed recently by the Charge de Affairs of that country's Embassy in Nigeria.

We find it difficult to understand the reason behind this ill-advised exoneration of Abacha by these former heads of state, two of whom are even warming up to rule the country the second time. Are they using this as a gimmick to warm themselves into the hearts of the northern establishment? Are they merely playing out a carefully scripted northern agenda? Or are they just playing to the northern gallery for selfish political reasons? Whatever it is, we believe that anybody or group of people trying to revise the clearly established fact that the late Abacha extensively looted the country's treasury, should be out of his mind. And this is very unfortunate.

For voicing such ill-conceived and ill-advised opinion about Abacha and his well known loot, Buhari and Babangida are no longer fit to lead this country, as, we believe that anybody who finds it difficult to recognize a bad leader would not make a good leader.

However, we have the feeling that what is fueling this latter-day attempt at reconstructing the Abacha misadventure could be the shoddy manner former President Obasanjo ran the country, and especially the slip-shod way he managed or mismanaged the recovered Abacha's loot. For eight years, he mouthed the anti-corruption mantra but did little to really bring culprits to book. It is possible that the double standard that characterized Obasanjo's Anti-graft campaign is now emboldening corrupt former leaders

desperately trying to cover their dirty tracts. This is why President Umaru Yar'Adua should not relent in the pursuit of the anti-corruption war. Leaders who looted the country's treasury should not be spared. And double standards should be avoided in dealing with the culprits.

Above all, the federal government should pursue the return of the remaining Abacha's loot in both local and foreign bank accounts to its logical conclusion. It should also reassure the people of its commitment to transparency and probity by utilizing the recovered loot judiciously for the benefit of the citizenry.

Addressing the same subject in its own editorial comments, the GUARDIAN Newspaper of June 18, 2008 adopted a slightly more subtle and intellectual posture under the title: Abacha and the Revisionists. The Editorial comments read in part as follows:

Recent attempts to launder the image of the late General Abacha, Nigeria's maximum ruler between 1993 to 1998 smacks of invidious revisionism, apart from being insensitive. First was the press conference by Mrs. Maryam Abacha, wife of the late General Abacha on Wednesday, June 4, a few days to the 10th anniversary of his death.

She spoke to the effect that her husband had been wrongly accused and that there is no conclusive proof that he looted the public treasury as has been alleged. Her reason: the man is not 'around to (either) say "yes I did this (or) to deny it." Mrs. Abacha, perhaps oblivious of where the buck of responsibilities stops in governance, even thinks that it is the ministers in her husband's administration that should be held

accountable. Next were the comments credited to three former military heads of state, which echoed, one way or the other, Mrs. Abacha's defense of her husband. This was on June 8, at a lecture in memory of the late dictator.

Said Gen. Muhammadu Buhari who together with his colleagues, overthrew, in 1983, a democratically elected government, in violation of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, "All the allegations leveled against the personality of the late General Sani Abacha will remain allegations... General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida who led a revolt against his commander-in-chief in a 1985 coup d'état stated that "it is not true that (Abacha) looted public treasury, I knew who Abacha was because I was close to him." General Abdusalami Abubakar who inherited the mantle of leadership following the death of Abacha in 1998, was also full of praises for his former boss.

Not a few people see self-interest as the driving motive of the views expressed by these former rulers of Nigeria. In the typical nature of the disciplined forces, esprit-de-corps requires that one stands by his colleague through thick and thin. It runs unfathomably deep within the services. But esprit de corps should not become an excuse for insensitivity. There are military officers who have been known to stand firm on the grounds of principle and defend the truth. Obviously, General Buhari, Babangida and Abubakar do not belong in this category. There must be something so morally wrong with citizens, regardless of ranking, to try to turn history on its head so bare-facedly. We think that the interest of Nigeria should override any other interest, private or sectional. If self interest is the justification to insult

our intelligence and so brazenly challenge our sense of history, we feel constrained to qualify this act as despicable and most unworthy of people in leadership positions.

Revisionism is a common strategy of those who seek to tamper with the facts of history. In the specific case of Abacha's handling of public funds, the evidence, as established during the Obasanjo Administration is indeed damning. At the time, it was established that General Abacha had stashed away public funds illegally in the banks across the world running into about \$3 billion.

Part of the money kept in Swiss banks was returned to Nigeria by the Swiss authorities. Abacha's son, Mohammed, was also put on trial by the Federal government although charges were later dropped when the Abacha family agreed to return money to government. Besides, General Abacha's name features prominently in Transparency International's list of most corrupt leaders in the world. General Buhari spoke about unproven allegations. What is unproven if we may ask, about Abacha's reign of terror, his violation of human rights and sheer sadism of his government, which brought grief to many families? Where is the justification for the image laundering by General Buhari, Babangida and Abubakar?

Perhaps the sub-text to the general opinion on Abacha was provided by General Abubakar when he said "it is quite unfortunate and unfair to accuse the family of the late Sani Abacha of looting public funds. But now, we have been seeing what is happening..." General Abubakar seems to be saying invariably that there is greater corruption in the country now than

was the case under the military. But how does that translate into confirmation of Abacha as a man of integrity? It does not lie in the mouth of the three Generals to comment so expertly on the delicate subject of integrity.

What is beyond dispute is that the present malaise that pervades the polity would not at all have been so widespread if the military and particularly the three Generals did not run Nigeria so badly. General Muhammadu Buhari ran a totalitarian government, which trampled upon basic human rights and paid scant attention to the people's welfare. The Babangida regime introduced anti-people policies, which ruined the economy and resulted in the dispossession of Nigerians.

In June 1993, that same government annulled a democratic election and threw the country into a long season of trauma. General Abubakar's tenure was short but it was essentially a military government. Surely, it is not a credit to the capabilities of these Generals that a quarter of a century of their leadership provided the foundation for the comprehensive mess that confronts the nation today. This fact alone is enough to keep the Generals from insulting our collective psyche.

We have no reason to think that the opinions of the trio are shared by other Generals of the armed forces of our country, serving or retired. Furthermore, it need not be assumed that their comments reflect the feelings of any group in any part of the country. General Buhari, Babangida and Abubakar have spoken only for themselves. But they are wrong. And it is strange that they have failed to realize that they may

be unwittingly endorsing corruption as acceptable, a gesture that is most unbecoming of statesmen.

Leadership, Nigeria and the Abacha Factor

The media comments reproduced above were in line with those contained in practically all the country's national media at the material time as the newspapers spoke almost in one voice on the subject. These same views were echoed in most resorts and places where Nigerians meet to exchange views and castigate their leaders, rightly or wrongly. Surprisingly, we were not aware of any public response by the Generals in their own defense in reply to the criticisms directed at them and no one else seemed to have risen in their defense, which is unusual in the complex and politically charged environment of that period.

Whilst we can well understand the national mood that prompted the media and other national reactions to the statements attributed to the three former military Heads of State over the Abacha issue, perhaps posterity would be more charitable towards them in this context, considering the environment and circumstances in which they made the alleged statements during a condolence visit to a bereaved family. In most parts of Nigeria, the custom and tradition is that condolence visits to families are solemn occasions that demand considerable sympathy and lavish praise and glorification of the dead. If such peculiarly Nigerian factors are taken into account and considering the fact that the supreme sacrifice had already been paid by the head of the Abacha family, perhaps a more charitable approach may be justified, without necessarily compromising the concepts of accountability, integrity, and the overall national interest.

It is noteworthy that in the particular circumstances of the Abacha case, it has been suggested, that while Abacha may have been as culpable as some other leaders who also transgressed, this case has been so vigorously exposed and documented because of the circumstances of his exit as well as the posture of the governments that succeeded him, coupled with his unavailability and inability to cover up some of his own tracks as others may have done. To strengthen this point of view, we are confronted with several plausible reasons. For example, we are reminded that according to the United Nations and World Bank reports, the estimated amount of money “stolen” or “embezzled” by Nigerian leaders from the national treasury in about 30 years is between \$400 and \$500 billion US Dollars. We understand that about US\$3 billion has been attributed to Abacha, out of this staggering figure. Naturally, Nigeria and posterity will continue to address the Abacha case in the context of the country’s many leadership failures. In doing so, most of these factors will be taken into account and possibly, the final judgment would not place all the blame on Abacha and a few of our political military leaders. Ultimately, we will all share in the blame in one way or the other, knowing that every country gets the kind of leaders it deserves. This is primarily because the leaders reflect the values, the culture and the political system installed by the people.

Leadership, Nigeria and the Abiola Factor

In the case of Abiola, the mood of the nation as reflected in the media at the material time was captured in the editorial comments published in the *Thisday Newspaper* of July 15,

2008 under the title “*Abiola and the Road Not Taken*” and it reads in part as follows:

Lagos — It was time again last week for family, friends and pro-democracy activists, joined by millions of ordinary Nigerians, to commemorate the death of business mogul, Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yoruba land and the winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, Bashorun M.K.O Abiola. The election was annulled by the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida, whose successor, the late General Sani Abacha, later jailed Abiola for four years for declaring himself president, until the death of the politician on July 10, 1998.

In a country in dire need of heroes, Abiola has become a quintessential hero of Nigeria’s democracy. Since his brief but memorable emergence as the custodian of a mandate given by Nigerians in the nation’s freest and fairest election ever, he has always captured the imagination of his compatriots. He is still pointing, even in death, to the path not taken in Nigeria’s troubled search for free elections, unity, development and dogged commitment to the cause of nationhood. Abiola has come to represent these and many more.

Indeed, on the anniversary of his death every year, the nation has always expressed gratefulness for his sacrifice and the embrace of martyrdom in the defense of the people’s will expressed freely on June 12, even long after the people lost hope. The occasion of the 10th anniversary of his death, however, had been marked in a unique way. This was not only because it was a landmark event, but also because of the background against which it was taking place.

Although, hardly a matter of conjecture, since the results of the election had been published in various forms after the annulment, the umpire in that election and former electoral commission boss, Professor Humphrey Nwosu, recently reaffirmed Abiola as the winner and published the election results in his new book which rightly identifies "June 12" as a worthy foundation in Nigeria's search for an enduring democratic culture and true federalism.

We agree with this assessment. Abiola's election has become a true benchmark on this score. It seemed on the eve of June 12 he had no hope when, as a Muslim, he picked another Muslim, Alhaji Baba Gana Kingibe, as his running mate in a country with touchy religious sensibilities. On the other hand, bookmarkers equally said the teeming northern voters would not elect a southerner. These predictions arising from Nigeria's divisive politics before Abiola's emergence came to naught. Abiola swept to victory with an unprecedented pan-Nigerian mandate.

A new indivisible country seemed to be emerging. Then we lost it, first with Abiola's incarceration and, later, his eventual death when he seemed to be on the verge of realizing the mandate. Nigeria has since gone back to its deplorable culture of stolen elections. We seriously need to retrace our steps.

We continue to salute the courage of the late Bashorun Abiola. If ever there was a Nigerian Dream, he truly lived it and desired that his compatriots followed suit as exemplified by his manifesto, "farewell to poverty", and his campaign outfit 'hope '93'. As a stammerer, he overcame the grinding poverty of his roots to become immensely famous and wealthy

because of his legendary benevolence, philanthropy and most recognized face of wealth and success. Simultaneously, he was a 'big man' who comfortable with being the fellow next door. Nigerians voted massively for him as a result.

For brutally thwarting the wish of the people, the regimes of Generals Babangida and Abacha were unpatriotic and will always come in for censure until atonement is made. The same goes for elements that had a hand in the annulment but who are masquerading as democrats today. Conversely, the nation will always owe a debt of gratitude to those pro-democracy fighters led by the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO). Risking lives and limb, they insisted that the will of the people must prevail.

As a fitting tribute to the memory of Abiola and the sacrifice of those unsung Nigerians, the government needs to urgently acknowledge the need to officially immortalize the June 12 election winner by recognizing his victory and letting him take his place amongst past Nigerian leaders. It should be the first step in coming to terms with that episode in the nation's history and guarding against the nation travelling that road again.

As we reflect on the future of our country in the context of our present theme, we have several lessons to learn from the Abiola and Abacha factors as landmark events in our national political history. We have taken the opportunity to reproduce some of these editorials, which generally reflect the views of millions of Nigerians on these major national tragedies. In doing so, the intention is not to villify, condemn or to find faults, especially after the key

personalities had paid the supreme price for their leadership roles in our turbulent and complex political environment. On the contrary, our objective is to highlight the lessons that flow from these episodes in the hope that such lessons will contribute in shaping our search for a better future and in encouraging the leadership elite to appreciate the values of good leadership and the need for working towards a more stable and united Nigerian nation in the overall interest of all Nigerians in a passionate and determined effort to build a vibrant spirit of patriotism and nationalism.

CHAPTER 15

ETHNIC AND SECTIONAL
ORGANISATIONS AS BUILDING
BLOCKS FOR DEVELOPMENT

A few years ago, a prominent Caucasian was reported as having said publicly to the hearing of some prominent Africans, who did not challenge his statement, that Africa is the only continent in the world that has not recorded any social, economic or political development and has become poorer in the past 25 years. As patriotic Nigerians, we are entitled to denounce this statement and to claim that Africa has recorded several positive developments in some respects during the past 25 years. Having given this obvious patriotic response, we may have some difficulty in proving that the general level of poverty in our midst has not increased over the period. In our own case as Nigerians, perhaps we should truthfully examine

the prevailing state of affairs in our own country to determine the true position.

The Prevailing State of the Nation

Perhaps it would be more meaningful, realistic and convenient if we approach this subject by referring to my recent encounter with the Nigerian media. In recent years, it has become fashionable for our innovative national media to confront randomly selected Nigerians to ascertain their views on the state of the nation, especially during our Independence Anniversary celebrations. I was a victim of this media invasion during our 49th Independence Anniversary celebrations. Since I spoke frankly, as a patriotic Nigerian with national credentials, I will restate some of the points I made to the media in answer to their questions. Interestingly, there was a measure of uniformity in the questions. For example, the first question reads:

“As we celebrate our 49th Anniversary, how have we fared as a nation and where did we go wrong?”

I answered as follows:

“In 1960, when Nigeria achieved its political independence, we were students in England. It was a glorious event which we celebrated with a great sense of achievement and satisfaction. We welcomed, with pride, the birth of our own nation, free from what we saw as the indignity of colonialism. We had very high hopes at independence. These high hopes were inspired by our vision of a great African nation that would be a source of satisfaction and pride to all Nigerians, the entire continent of Africa and beyond. These high hopes, expectations, and aspirations were proudly sustained during the first few years of independence.

During those early years, the pattern of governance under the federal parliamentary system was simple, dignified and inexpensive. The political leadership protected and respected the interests and well-being of the people. The term '419' was only known by lawyers and policemen as a section of the Criminal Code. Violent crimes, ethnic and religious conflicts, abuse of office and social injustice were relatively unknown. As a result, we enjoyed a reasonable measure of political and social stability, as well as national unity and cohesion. Although we were not a rich country and had not yet embraced the "oil boom", the country enjoyed a good measure of social and economic development. Poverty was not a problem then, as most ordinary Nigerians were well fed and met their basic needs. Because the quality of leadership was generally high and selfless, the people responded appropriately. The Nigerian society at federal and regional levels, were on balance, more humane and better disciplined than what it is today. Quality education with character building was very much a part of our national culture, especially for those aspiring to leadership positions at regional and federal levels, and Nigerians were respected internationally.

In response to the second arm of the question as to where we had gone wrong and the origin of our national decline, I made the point that the genesis of our national political problems was that the democratic process was stifled in its infancy when our post-independence political stability had not been firmly established. As a result, we experienced many traumatic and destabilizing political upheavals climaxing in a most tragic civil war. This marked

the beginning of our decline as a nation and the virtual collapse of our value system, as well as the end of our respect for one another, for our institutions and human life in general and the beginning of leadership by individuals who were not equipped for democratic leadership functions.

This tragic invasion of the country's leadership introduced the money culture which destroyed quality leadership based on character and integrity. With the civil war, violent crimes set in and our nation declined to the extent that integrity, good leadership, self respect, respect for our institutions and for others virtually gave way to the "money cult", abuse of office and corruption at all levels of society. Forty-nine years after independence, the only factor that matters most in our political culture is money, no matter how it is acquired. Those who have it in abundance hold those who do not have it in total contempt, because they know that they can acquire practically everything with their money, including the people and their vote. At 49, our major national problems are corruption, ethnicity, poverty and massive unemployment amongst our youth, which breed violent crimes, indiscipline and insecurity, including the new wave of kidnapping for ransom, which was totally alien to our national culture. The universal perception today is that we now have a society that breeds poverty in the midst of plenty, with the leadership elite not showing much visible concern for the poverty-stricken ordinary Nigerians. This general perception tends to fuel the cynical and hostile attitude of the people towards the leadership elite, which is not good for societal equilibrium. I also stress the point that there is nothing new in these views, which have been expressed by several discerning Nigerians before now."

In answer to the question as to the way forward for the nation, I had no hesitation in stating that the way forward is by a positive change of attitude by the country and its leadership. We must return to those values that made us great and respectable. There was a time when Nigerians and their leaders were highly respected nationally and internationally.

As we propagate the present administration's rebranding project, we should also re-invent those values, institutions and systems that once made us great. Nigeria is one of the highly endowed nations in the world and we have the natural and human resources to make us a world power. With commitment on the part of the people and the leadership, we can achieve the desired change that will propel us towards the better Nigerian nation of our dream, a nation that will be a source of pride to all Nigerians, irrespective of their ethnic or religious orientation.

My firm belief, which is shared by most well-meaning Nigerians, is that our future depends on the people of Nigeria and our leadership. No outsider is qualified to solve our problems for us. Some well-meaning Nigerians genuinely concerned about the continuing decline of our institutions and national values have been praying to God for salvation and redemption. Unfortunately, the indications are that God is so fed up with our antics that He does not seem ready to intervene until we have taken some practical steps to atone for our sins. "God helps those who help themselves," they say. God's intervention will come only when it becomes evident that Nigerians, especially the leadership elite, have started taking positive steps towards the building of a respectable African nation founded on equity and justice, with a commitment to

improving their society and helping the poor and the disadvantaged. Until such people make themselves available, the redemption and salvation we desperately require as part of our national transformation exercise will remain a figment of our collective imagination.

National Transformation

My plea is that the national transformation process should begin now. We should start by eliminating all those negative factors that impede our national stability, progress and development. In the process, we should note that there are broadly two types of Nigerians, with each group fully represented within the leadership class. The first group are those who passionately and genuinely believe in the Nigerian national concept and are therefore willing to make the necessary sacrifices to ensure that Nigeria survives and thrives. The second group are those who have no interest or have lost interest in the Nigerian experiment for several reasons. This second group is not interested in any lasting solution to our national problems. All they want is to stick around for as long as possible to exploit and milk the country's resources for their personal and sectional benefits while it lasts. There is also a relatively small but influential group who selfishly insist on the prevailing status quo, because they are benefitting from the system and the situation. For this group, their sycophants and supporters, anyone who advocates a change is seen as an unpatriotic rebel or saboteur. They consistently forget that the real patriots are those who stand for systems and institutions that would guarantee national unity, stability and the survival of the Nigerian nation. These groups deserve harsh lessons on the wisdom and enduring values

of the concept of enlightened self interests, with its long term benefit.

Fortunately, the majority of the well-meaning Nigerians recognize the great potential of this country and the huge benefits of such a potentially great African nation in today's world environment. It is certainly in our best interest to team up with this group to ensure the survival of the Nigerian experiment, despite its British colonial origin. To this end, we must create the necessary political and structural changes that would produce and sustain a Nigerian nation that would be a source of joy, satisfaction and pride to all Nigerians. We desperately need efficient, reliable systems and institutions that will produce selfless and committed leadership at all levels of our society, if we are to achieve the desired national objectives.

Leaders, Institutions and the People

There are several first-class potential national leaders from all parts of Nigeria, but the system, institutions and nature of our politics do not inspire and sustain such quality leadership, and the ethnic factor has not helped matters. Ethnicity is still an impediment to the development of the Nigerian nation of our dream. It is also a major African problem, especially in multi-ethnic nations like Nigeria. This is why we still talk about a Yoruba President, an Igbo President, a Hausa-Fulani President, and an Ijaw President and so on. Nigeria as a modern nation will triumph the day we elect national leaders entirely on the basis of their personal merits and attributes, without considering the 'ethnic factor'. We have some lessons to learn from the American system that produced an Obama who is an African-American with a father who is a Luo in Kenya.

Interestingly, in Kenya today, it would have been virtually impossible for the Kikuyus and other Kenyan ethnic groups to elect an Obama, a Luo as President. The prayer of most well-meaning Nigerians is that God should give us an enlightened leader from any part of Nigeria, who will take us to the Promised Land sooner than later.

National Unity, Good Governance and Cost of Governance

Considering the many political, ethnic and religious upheavals that we have witnessed as a nation in the past five decades of independence, our national reformation exercise, designed to promote peace, unity and stability should include some form of national reconciliation. To accelerate this national reconciliation exercise and to promote national unity and stability, we should produce a truly Nigerian People's Constitution as genuinely federal as the Independence Constitution formulated and adopted by our visionary, politically wise founding fathers; who took into account the fears, interest and cultural disposition of the country's ethnic groups. Such a constitution should create structures and institutions that will eliminate those factors that create social injustice and instability. Nigerians are now more politically mature and fully conscious of their rights and interests. Above all, they demand selfless and committed leaders and a truly democratic process based on the rule of law and credible elections. They demand good governance and less expensive governments. The present situation in which the cost of governance is above 80% of the annual budget, with less than 20% for development, cannot be right for a developing nation like Nigeria that really wants to develop

and survive in the present highly competitive world environment.

The above is the summary of my humble views on the state of the nation and some suggestions on the way forward as expressed to the media when we celebrated our 49th Independence Anniversary. Unfortunately, not much has changed since then. This is a brief summary of the precarious state of the Nigerian nation as we celebrate our 100 years as a modern African nation.

National Development and the War Against Corruption

Corruption is a universal problem in the sense that it exists in all parts of the world, in varying degrees. It is a major problem in Nigeria and in most African countries, mainly because these countries are generally poor and under-developed to the extent that the effects of corruption are more devastating. The position today is that corruption is the greatest impediment to national stability and development in most African countries. It is a serious national problem in Nigeria because corruption exists at all levels of our society. Most Nigerian and non-Nigerian commentators on the subject believe that this chronic national problem reached such alarming proportions because the leadership elite, instead of reducing its negative impact on national development, seems to have condoned and, in some cases, have become the promoters of its negative hold on the country's national institutions. The general perception of ordinary folks is that despite the numerous wars against corruption waged by different administrations over the years, the situation has deteriorated to the extent that the leadership elite have

become the primary engines of corruption. To further compound matters for the country and its leadership, some international observers now insist that our wars against corruption do not seem to be yielding positive results. Unfortunately, this is one more area in which Nigeria and Africa seem to have regressed in the past three decades. It is noteworthy that during the 1960s and most of the 1970s, the level of corruption in Nigeria was relatively low. In those days, the world had no reason to describe Nigeria as one of the most corrupt nations of the world. Between then and the beginning of the 21st century, the situation had deteriorated so much that by the year 2000, Transparency International, an international agency involved in the fight against global corruption, had dared to describe Nigeria as one of “the most corrupt nations in the world”.

Thanks to the creation of such national agencies as the EFCC and the ICPC, Nigeria’s rating and classification has improved slightly. Undoubtedly, but for the so-called “Nigerian factor”, a negative expression coined by our present cynical society, these institutions created to fight corruption would have made more significant impact. The unfortunate position today is that the ‘War Against Corruption’ is still a long way from victory. Hopefully, the transformation crusade will produce the ultimate prescriptions for victory in this seemingly endless war against corruption. The fact that respectable organizations and individuals are seriously addressing this problem are positive signs of hope. Moreover, the fact that Nigeria still has several honest and respectable men and women of integrity in all parts of the country who are incorruptible is enough proof that corruption can still be eliminated or drastically reduced.

Ethnic and Regional Organisations in Nation Building and the War Against Corruption

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural developing nation. With about 300 ethnic nationalities and diverse cultural backgrounds, Nigeria's national strength is derived from the combined cultural strength of the various ethnic entities that make up the country. Nigeria's regional and ethnic organizations are products of the country's diverse cultural unity. They can be effectively galvanized as vehicles for nation building and for the elimination of those negative factors, like corruption that impede progress and development. Although we have more than 200 regional and ethnic organizations representing the primary interests of their people, only a few of these organizations occupy conspicuous national positions. The most vocal of these organizations include the Afenifere for the Yorubas, Ohanaeze for the Igbos and the Arewa Consultative Forum for the ethnic groups in the Northern States. Others are the Ijaw National Congress, the South-South National Assembly and the Tiv and Idoma Development Unions, to mention just a few. This list is far from exhaustive and is only intended to paint a sketchy picture of these organizations in the context of our theme.

Some well-meaning Nigerians have suggested that ethnic and regional organizations should be abolished or discouraged because they weaken national loyalty and commitment to the higher concept of the Nigerian nation. They also argue in this context, that some misguided sectional and ethnic organizations fail to support the war against corruption and other societal evils when prominent members of their groups are involved. Ethnicity is an unavoidable reality. The challenge is to keep ethnic

organizations as cultural allies and instruments for forging national identity. There should be no incompatibility between ethnic identity and nationalism. In any event,, whatever may be the merits of this viewpoint, Nigerians will continue to resort to their ethnic and regional organizations as long as they have reason to believe that these sectional organizations offer them better social, cultural and political protection than any federal agency. For the present, we hope and expect that leaders of ethnic and sectional organizations will use them to promote those factors that advance national stability, progress and development, with less emphasis on those factors that are destructive and divisive. This was our policy objective during those years when I served as President of Ohaneze and leader of the Igbos. It worked because it enabled us to operate in harmony with the leadership of all other groups and zones in the country.

It is certainly in the interest of national unity, progress and development that leaders of ethnic and regional organizations should always recognize the dual and complementary nature of their leadership functions in the context of our collective national interest as Nigerians anxious to build a great African Nation out of our many ethnic nationalities. As they protect and advance their sectional interests, they should do so in an enlightened manner and in furtherance of our collective national interests since both interests are not and should not be in conflict, especially if our national policy is based on justice for all Nigerians.

This policy of recognizing the dual and complementary nature of our ethnic, regional and national interests, which in effect demands that in the pursuit of our sectional

interests, we must do nothing to diminish or destabilize our overall national interests and respect for the interest and position of other groups, was effectively used to achieve a measure of harmony and success at the National Political Reform conference in 2005. It earned for me and another Elder statesman, who led the delegation from the Northern states, Alhaji Umaru Dikko, the positions of Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively, of the Leaders and Elders Committee that harmonized, without acrimony, the major decisions of that conference. It was a useful learning process for most of us on the intricacies of nation building in a multi-ethnic developing nation.

That experience also gave us the opportunity of recognizing why it is important that leaders of ethnic and regional organizations should be selected with great care, since they have the capacity to influence the course of nation building positively or negatively. Whilst we completely agree with the traditional African saying that every person created by God has a useful role to play in society, from the eccentric, to the radical and even the lunatic during his lucid interval, my plea to our regional and ethnic organizations is that they should always ensure that the leaders of these organizations are balanced, mature, sensible and level-headed persons of sound judgment who, in addition to their love and commitment to their group, must also be genuinely committed to our collective national interest. In a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural setting like ours, it is not enough for such leaders to be passionate about their own sectional groups. They must also be passionate about the development and stability of Nigeria and must recognize and accommodate without bias the interests of all the other

groups that make up the country, in the interest of national unity, peace and stability.

The Journey So Far and the Way Forward

- (i) On the journey so far, we examined how we started with the Amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates under the British colonial authorities to the status of a modern African nation at independence in 1960 and on to the present tragic position when some well-meaning Africans have dared to describe Nigeria as Africa's sleeping giant and as "Africa's Failed Asset". The last is the title of a new book by a respectable Nigerian, Sir Olaniwun Ajayi. I saw the book in a popular bookshop as I was researching for this text.
- (ii) On the way forward, our plea to all the ethnic and regional organizations in the country, is that they should use their members and resources as vehicles in the war against corruption and other negative factors that impede our stability and development as a nation.
- (iii) National Transformation and other Desirable Changes - Even at the risk of committing several repetitions for purposes of emphasis, this text has identified some national weaknesses and desirable changes as perceived by most Nigerians. It has also made a case for national transformation and reconciliation and the creation of efficient and reliable institutions that could be trusted and respected by all Nigerians. Furthermore, having settled for democracy under the rule of law, we should install

reliable Electoral Systems to ensure that those elected are genuine representatives of the people, from their track records of integrity and selfless service. Such changes are possible because we are capable of restoring those values that made us respectable in the past.

Undoubtedly, one of the important decisions of the Umaru Musa Yaradua administration was the establishment of the Justice Mohammed Uwais' Electoral Reform Commission. We should have the political will to implement that committee's recommendations supported by many well-meaning Nigerians as part of our national transformation exercise.

- (iv) A Nigerian Peoples' Constitution - In line with the opinions of millions of Nigerians, we have consistently made a case for a truly Nigerian People's Constitution to reflect the political aspiration of all Nigerians in view of the multi-ethnic nature of the country; a constitution that would eliminate those divisive factors that impede our development. One that would promote national cohesion, patriotism, mutual respect and understanding amongst the country's many ethnic nationalities. In a multi-ethnic Nigeria, we clearly do not need a constitution that would satisfy some members of the Nigerian family and displease others or one that will fan the embers of extremism and anarchy. The greatest challenges facing the country's political leadership today are the issues of Constitutional Review and Electoral Reform. How we deal with these critical national issues will

determine the future direction of this nation. Our prayer is that the political leadership, especially the National Assembly and the presidency will see the wisdom in adopting the key provisions of the Mohammed Uwais Committee's report as well as constitutional amendments that reflect the genuine aspirations of all Nigerians. We need a constitution that will create reliable and efficient national institutions and produce selfless leaders of integrity who will sacrifice their personal interests for the collective good of the people of Nigeria. These were the considerations that guided our founding fathers. The primary focus of these leaders was the interest and well being of their people and this was the reason why none of them died wealthy in material terms. We will continue to celebrate them, not because of their wealth but for their selfless commitment to the well-being of their people and the country. The problem of corruption was not a major national problem in their time. We need a true federal Constitution of fewer federating units comparable to our independence Constitution, during which time the country recorded greater stability and development.

- (v) Cost of governance - The prevailing high cost of governance was one of the major issues we raised at the national Political Reform Conference attended by 400 eminent Nigerians in 2005. This conference, despite the political motive behind its conception, made several useful constitutional proposals aimed at saving the Nigerian nation from instability. Our position then, was that the cost of governance, which

remains in excess of about 80% of our Annual Budget is excessive for a relatively poor developing country like Nigeria, where there is so much poverty in the midst of plenty. This figure leaves virtually nothing for development. Probably this was the reason why our founding fathers settled for a less expensive democratic form of governance based on the federal parliamentary system.

- (vi) Grounds for Hope and Optimism - Since I am by nature an incurable optimist, I would like to end on an optimistic note. Despite the general atmosphere of despair around us and the prevailing high level of poverty, corruption and under development, it is my humble submission that the situation is far from hopeless. There are grounds for hope and optimism.

First, the fact that many Nigerians are now talking openly about our national decline and the need for a return to our old values, is a positive sign. These well-meaning Nigerians include some members of the leadership elite, the clergy and religious leaders from different backgrounds. At a recent lecture reported in *The Guardian* of January 18, 2010, held in Kaduna during the 9th Arewa House Yearly Memorial Lecture in honour of the former Premier of Northern Nigeria, late Sir Ahmadu Bello, three eminent Nigerians, Chief Ernest Shonekan, former Head of State, Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola, SAN of Lagos State and Professor Ango Abdullahi, former Vice Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, while noting the tragic decline of our national values, made a strong plea for an urgent transformation to a selfless and

transparent leadership, accountability, equitable distribution of the nation's wealth, and peaceful co-existence. They urged Nigerian leaders to emulate the country's founding fathers, like Sir Ahmadu Bello in whose honors the Annual lecture was being held. They maintained that they could not understand why good governance and accountability, which they see as the life blood of democratic governance, was proving so difficult to enforce by the present leaders, contrary to the situation in the days of Sir Ahmadu Bello and our other founding fathers.

Secondly, there are examples of countries in Africa and in other parts of the world that had drifted much lower than we have done and one day, they woke up from their slumber and turned their countries and institutions around. Most of these countries are now doing very well. Nigeria has the capacity, the leadership and resources to achieve the desired positive change. By God's grace, we will achieve the desired national objectives without allowing the country to descend to anarchy.

- (vii) Other positive leadership examples - There are other encouraging signs of hope and optimism in the form of some positive leadership examples. Nigerians are prompt in criticizing their leaders, but slow in acknowledging those who are doing relatively well. Even if we claim, with or without justification, that most of our leadership elite are primarily in politics to serve their personal interests rather than the collective national interest, we should be kind enough to acknowledge that there are some who went into

politics to give selfless service to the people, but were frustrated by our institutions and the political environment, which we, the people, created or sustained. We, the people of Nigeria, should also take part of the blame for the failure of our institutions and for the prevailing situation. In any event, there are some political leaders, including some of our present governors who are serving their people with a high degree of commitment, integrity and selfless leadership. For example, most of the people of Lagos state believe that Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola is doing a good job in cleaning up the face of Lagos. There are also other positive leadership examples in different parts of the country.

The issues raised in this section represent my understanding of the opinions of millions of ordinary Nigerians and friends of Nigeria who want our country to prosper and survive. Some of the subjects mentioned in this chapter have been referred to earlier in other parts of this book, but have been deliberately repeated for purposes of emphasis and for their relevance in the present context. If this emphasis helps to improve the quality of our national debate and the present national transformation exercise as we celebrate our Centenary, then our objective in this regard would have been served.



CHAPTER 16



GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN NATION- BUILDING

This chapter was inspired by a public lecture delivered by the author at the Michael Okpara Federal University of Agriculture in April 2013 under the auspices of the Gender Mainstreaming Project of the University. It focuses largely on the Nigerian experience in nation building over the past century. In addition to the gender issue, it covers such important topical issues as poverty alleviation, the ethnic factor and nation-building in the context of our present theme.

Nation-Building at 100 Years

From all accounts, the subject of nation-building at 100 has become topical since the beginning of this year when

the Federal government announced its plans for the celebration of our centenary to mark the first 100 years of Nigeria's existence as a modern nation. Undoubtedly, this is an important theme as well as an emotive and controversial subject, especially amongst our intellectuals. On the issue of the celebration of our 100 years, since the Amalgamation in 1914, the country seems to be broadly divided into two, those who maintain that there is a lot to celebrate and those who believe that there is nothing to celebrate and that we would have done a lot better without the intervention of the British colonial administration and the Amalgamation in 1914.

The Birth of the Nigerian Nation

Our history books tell us that there was no one political entity or nation known as Nigeria before 1914. Nigeria as a country came into formal existence in 1914 when the two British protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria and the Lagos colony were amalgamated by Sir Frederick Lugard, the then British colonial governor of these territories. The name Nigeria, which was adopted in preference to other suggested names, was coined in 1897 by Miss Flora Shaw, who was Sir Frederick Lugard's mistress at that time and who later married him. Thanks to Flora Shaw and the subtle and efficient effect of "woman power", the name Nigeria has stuck to this day, despite many attempts to change it before and after independence.

Amalgamation in 1914 was a British act, not the act of indigenous Nigerians. Undoubtedly, if the act of amalgamation had been a political decision of the people, in their own best interest, it would have been welcomed as a worthy act of unification. But being a British colonial

act, the few vocal indigenous nationalists saw this amalgamation as an arrangement made by a colonial power for its own administrative and economic convenience. In any event, this act of amalgamation marked the birth of Nigeria as one political entity.

Between 1914 and 1960 when the country achieved its political independence from Great Britain, the country was administered by the British colonial office through their Nigeria-based British governors and top civil servants under the provisions of the various British-engineered constitutions.

Independence and Nation Building

Although the task of nation-building may have started soon after the amalgamation, leading up to the time of limited self-government during the 1950s, the process became more urgent with increased tempo at independence. Nigeria became independent on October 1, 1960 and this marked the end of the 100 years of British colonial rule which started in 1861 with the British annexation of Lagos. With independence, Nigeria became a sovereign state, free to run all its affairs and to build the Nigerian nation of its dreams. Before independence the early nationalists and politicians tended to blame the British colonial administrators for all our problems, but with independence, the responsibility for directing our national destiny passed on to the people and the political leaders they elected to direct their national affairs at all levels of society.

How Have We Fared in the Task of Nation-Building?

This is an important self-examination question which we should attempt to address in this text. Furthermore, have we been able to build the great Nigerian nation that we deserve? If not, what are the factors that have impeded our progress in the right direction? In the course of addressing these questions, we should also examine such vital issues as poverty alleviation, gender mainstreaming and other relevant issues in line with our theme. Before we respond to these heavily loaded questions, let us begin by examining the score card since independence to date.

Nation-Building: The Post-Independence Score Card

As an incurable optimist, who, with age, has become more realistic in his optimism, my submission is that Nigeria deserves a pass mark in the score card of our post-independence achievements, at least in some areas. Even the most cynical pessimists amongst us will agree that we have done well in some areas, and I will mention some of these.

In my view, our greatest post-independence achievement as a nation is the fact that despite the numerous political and ethnic upheavals that we have experienced over the years, including a bitter and destructive civil war, we have been able to preserve our country as one political entity. The credit goes to all Nigerians. It takes the Nigerian kind of elastic, enduring and forgiving spirit to record this kind of achievement, especially considering that what we inherited as a country was an unwieldy political structure and system that

seemed, from inception, to have been designed to ensure political instability. To have maintained some degree of national cohesion under this system, in a multi-ethnic African Society, is quite an achievement for which we should congratulate ourselves.

We have also recorded other post-independence developmental achievements in other areas. For example, we have, on our own, built a world-class new capital city in Abuja; as well as other modern cities and new towns in places that were rural areas and forests at the time of independence in 1960. We have constructed new highways, airports and seaports, road networks and satellite communication systems. Although we have allowed our rail lines to go into disrepair, serious attempts are now being made to repair and reactivate them to ease the pressure of traffic on our roads.

We have created several multi-millionaires and billionaires out of our oil wealth. Although some of these new rich men and women seem to have become intoxicated by their sudden wealth and are flaunting it recklessly to the annoyance of the poor masses, some of our more serious and sensible rich men and women are applying their wealth towards national development and the development of our African brethren in other African countries. One area to which attention should be directed is the establishment of durable industries and infrastructure that will generate employment for our many youths.

Since independence, Nigerians have been playing active and useful roles on the international scene. Our professionals and intellectuals are holding key positions in different parts of the globe contributing to the building of a better world. Our soldiers and other security services have been most active in promoting world peace and

security, especially in Africa.

In the light of all these, we have every reason to claim a pass mark in our post-independence nation-building efforts. There is another side to the coin that I hope to bring out as we examine those areas in which we seem to have failed.

Areas in Which We Have Failed

In spite of the foregoing, the available evidence indicates that we have failed woefully in some areas. Many well-meaning Nigerians and friends of Nigeria in the international community maintain that, considering the vast natural and human resources at our disposal as a nation, and our strategic position in Africa and the World, our nation should have performed much better. Some have even dared to describe our country as a failed state. As I was searching my library for some literature to buttress my position on our theme, I came across an authographed copy of a book written by an eminent Nigerian, Mazi Sam Ohuabunwa, an industrialist, who, like most of us, believes in this country. The book was written and published in 2010 when we celebrated our 50th Anniversary as an independent nation and was aptly titled *NIGERIA AT 50: Time For The Evolution of a New Nation*. In his introduction, the author stated in part as follows:

Nigeria was a promising country when it gained independence in 1960 and showed steady growth and good performance until 1966 when the military struck and destabilized the nation. But thirty years since the war ended and eleven unbroken years of democratic governance since 1999, the anticipated growth and development have not been realized and

in many respects things have gotten worse, despite flashes of improvements in some areas. Unemployment has reached 40% amongst the youth and crime has become one of the fastest growing industries in our country. At home, Nigerians are unhappy with the situation and abroad, they have lost national dignity as we are seen as a largely corrupt country with predatory leaders and a complacent and indolent citizenry who are all working to bring the country to its knees with a possible disintegration..."

Unfortunately, this picture of the Nigerian situation painted by the author represents the view of many well-meaning Nigerians and friends of Nigeria who are genuinely concerned about our progress and development. It is sad to note that more than 53 years after independence and as we are preparing to celebrate our centenary as a nation in a few months, our situation still remains so bleak. It is also disheartening to note that despite half a century of managing our own affairs with so much oil money available to us, not much has improved for the ordinary folk since 1960. As if to add to our frustration, available statistics seem to remind us that things have been deteriorating almost on a daily basis over the years. For example, poverty has worsened from 45% in 1970 to approximately 70% in 2009, while life expectancy has reduced from 54 years in 1980 to 47 years in 2008. Other more recent human development indices point in the same negative direction; indicating that the general situation is not getting better.

Interestingly, Nigerians are easily the most religious Africans as evidenced by the large crowds at our churches on Sundays and mosques on Fridays. The one thing that

seems to be growing is the increasing number of adherents to our different religions as well as our firm belief that God is on our side and that by some miracle, He will take us to the Promised Land, conveniently forgetting that we also have a part to play. We will return to this element of hope for a better tomorrow, but in the meantime, we should look at those factors that impede our progress and development as a nation and how we should tackle them as part of our National Reformation Agenda which must be pursued with commitment, determination and abundant prayers for God's blessing.

Factors that Impede our Growth and Development

There are several endemic social, political, cultural and economic factors that impede our growth and development as a modern nation. Unless we mobilize the necessary political will to eliminate these negative factors, the achievement of the Nigeria of our dreams will continue to elude us. These negative factors include:

- a. Corruption on a large Scale and the mismanagement of our National Resources;
- b. Widespread and abject poverty;
- c. High unemployment amongst the youth, resulting in increasing crime rate and insecurity;
- d. Inter-ethnic conflict and its negative effects on our collective national aspirations;
- e. Absence of a truly Nigerian national interest;
- f. Absence of a genuine peoples' constitution;
- g. The leadership problem;
- h. Absence of a genuine and robust electoral process;

- i. Absence of incorruptible judicial process to support the rule of law and our democracy;
- j. High cost of governance;
- k. Gender inequities and the relegation of women to the back room;
- l. Avoidable religious conflicts;
- m. Inadequate attention to education, especially productive, character-building education at all levels.

These are just a few of the negative factors that have impeded the task of nation-building since independence. To inspire further discussions on these subjects, I will briefly highlight some of the more topical ones in the context of our present theme.

Corruption and Mismanagement of our National Resources

As stated earlier in this text, corruption is a serious universal problem which exists in all human societies. It exists on a very large scale in Nigeria and it is generally agreed that its negative effects on all aspects of our growth and development efforts, makes it the most destructive factor in our progress and development as a nation.

Our problem today is not only that corruption exists in Nigeria, but that the level of corruption at all levels of our society and in practically all our social, political and economic institutions is increasing daily, to the extent that it is destroying the possibility of any form of social stability, progress and development. Everyone, including

the country's leadership elite, from the religious to the political, agree that corruption is our major national problem. Although several wars have been waged against corruption by various administrations in the past 30 years, they have had limited impact and the situation appears to be worsening.

One of the most damaging consequences of the high level of corruption in our country is the disastrous impact it has had on the management and control of our national resources, especially our oil revenue. It is on record that in the past thirty years, more of our vast oil revenue has been lost to corruption than to the development of the nation. Oil is a wasting asset which will disappear after some time. While it lasts, most sane nations who have it use their oil wealth to create productive industries that will remain when the oil revenue stops flowing. In our own case, we have wasted most of these funds. Perhaps, it is not yet too late for us to begin to salvage the situation. This is the message and warning that is coming to us from well-meaning Nigerians and friends of Nigeria all over the world, including the former US President, Bill Clinton.

Mr. Clinton is a universally acclaimed World leader who is respected for his wisdom, selfless leadership and commitment to the well being of his fellow human beings. Many of us regard him as a friend of Nigeria who is interested in the development of this nation, as evidenced by his many visits to Nigeria and the interest he has shown in our affairs. During his recent visit in February 2013, he made some vital points in one of his Press briefings, that we consider relevant to our present theme. In one such press report carried in *The Guardian* of February 27, 2013, he highlighted Nigeria's mismanagement of its rich natural

resources and warned of the consequences to Africa and the world if Nigeria is driven to failure as a result of corruption and the negative factors that have continued to impede the country's development and national stability.

The Guardian report continued as follows:

It was a stark reminder of the wastefulness of the nation's leaders as former United States (US) President Bill Clinton declared that Nigeria had failed to properly use her rich natural resources. Clinton did not mince words as he told Nigeria: "You haven't done well with your oil money."

According to Clinton, Nigeria cannot afford to fail because if she does, the consequences for Africa would be disastrous. He challenged Nigerian leaders to create economic opportunities for the majority of the citizens.

The former U.S. President spoke while answering stakeholders' questions at the 18th ThisDay Awards organized by the ThisDay Newspaper to honour 18 teachers for their commitment to duty. The well-attended event was held at the June 12 Cultural Centre, Abeokuta.

Clinton urged Nigeria to find a way of bringing home her intellectuals, who he said, were scattered all over the world, to assist in developing the country instead of using their talents to develop other nations.

Answering a question, the former American President said: "When I became President, my Secretary for Commerce did a lot of work in Africa before he was tragically killed in a plane crash in 1995. I told him to make a list of the 10 most important

countries in the world for the 21st century and Nigeria was on the list.

"Imagine the future of the entire continent if Nigeria fails or South Africa fails. So, you are a country of great potential."

He added: "I would say you have about three big challenges. First of all, like 90 percent of the countries which have one big resource, you haven't done well. He said that he expected Nigeria to reinvest its oil money in different ways.

Noting the disparity in the ownership of wealth in Nigeria, Clinton said: "You have to somehow bring economic opportunities to the people who don't have. This is not a problem specific to Nigeria. Almost every place in the world, prosperity is heavily concentrated in and around urban areas. So, you have all these political problems and now violence problems, religious differences, and all the rhetoric of Boko Haram, but the truth is that the poverty rate in the North is three times greater than what it is in the Lagos area and to deal with that, you have to have both a powerful stake in the local councils and a national policy that work together."

He expressed the view that "there has to be a way to take the staggering intellectual and organizational ability that Nigerians exhibit in every country in the world in which they are immigrant and bring it to bear here so that the country as a whole can rise. One of the people on my trip with me today who unfortunately could not come up here because he had to go to visit his family is a young Nigerian-American, named Nnamdi." He described Nnamdi as a wonderful man, saying, "He (Nnamdi) does great

work in America for poor kids in Arkansas City and he became a friend of mine. Both his parents have Ph.Ds, his sister has a Ph.D. He often says "I'm the failure in my family and I only have a university degree and I play football. My point is there are Nigerians who are like this all over the world. What you have to figure out is how to keep those people in Nigeria and how to ensure that their success leads on into the rest of the country. So, I think solving the economic divide that is in your country will help the political divide; making better use of your resources."

The former American President compared Nigeria to India which he said "has unbelievable entrepreneurs but they are not very good at collecting capital and investing it in infrastructure so that they can unite the poor part of the country with the rich part. This is what you have to do. And then, you have to empower people with education so they can succeed at home as well as around the world."

President Clinton in this press interview as in his earlier press statements on Nigeria warned about the tragic consequences of allowing Nigeria to continue to drift to the point of becoming a failed state. He mentioned some of the factors that we have identified in this text as factors that impede the process of nation- building such as poverty, mismanagement of our resources, and the need for adequate attention to education as a major factor in nation building especially in the very competitive world environment of the 21st century.

He made an important point about the thousands of creative Nigerian experts, professionals and intellectuals making useful contributions to the

development of other countries and urged that we should encourage them to return and join in making Nigeria the great nation it deserves to be. To attract these foreign based Nigerians to return home, we should create the right atmosphere that would encourage them to do so. The security situation must improve and the few who have responded to this call should not be made to regret their decision to return home due to the hostile reception we accord them especially when it is obvious that they mean well and are committed to the reform efforts designed to improve our national aspirations.

Poverty and Poverty Alleviation

It is generally agreed that poverty is one of the major factors that have impeded our nation-building process. Poverty is bad anywhere in the world and no nation can achieve durable national growth and development when a large percentage of its people are on the poverty line. There is a lot of truth in the statement that a poor and hungry man is an angry man. To have so many poor, hungry and angry persons in any society is dangerous. Most of the violent crimes and insecurity that we see in Nigeria today are attributable to poverty and the worst form of poverty is our kind of extreme poverty in the midst of plenty. From all accounts, there is no reason why we should have the type of extreme poverty we have in Nigeria today which is mainly due to the poor and uneven distribution of our national wealth and the mismanagement of our national resources. A more equitable distribution of our national wealth and more effective poverty alleviation measures should be devised to improve the situation.

Poverty Alleviation Measures Vital

Our governments have in the past 30 years embarked on various programmes of poverty alleviation. Unfortunately, most of these have not achieved the desired objectives, going by the evidence available to us. The high level of unemployment amongst our youths resulting in insecurity and increased crimes, are all by-products of the prevailing level of poverty and the apparent inadequacy of our poverty alleviation programmes. Considering the negative effects of the prevailing level of poverty on our national stability, a lot more efforts must be made in the implementation of our poverty alleviation measures as part of our national reformation efforts.

Inter-Ethnic Conflicts and the Problem of Defining a Nigerian National Interest

Next to corruption and the misapplication of the nation's resources, the other major challenge we face as a developing multi-ethnic African nation is the building of a modern united nation out of the many ethnic nationalities that make up the country we inherited from our colonial masters. Nigeria has been a victim of inter-ethnic conflicts for many decades.

Apart from the many ethnic wars, conflicts and civil commotions that we have been through over the years, the ethnic factor has been responsible for developmental impediments; such as the location of key national industries in wrong places, as well as the appointment of incompetent persons to key positions in vital national institutions, resulting in avoidable losses to the nation. In addition to these obvious examples, the most destructive effect of the negative aspects of ethnicity is the fact that

its existence makes it difficult for us to define and agree on what really amounts to our true national interest as Nigerians, as opposed to our interests as indigenes of our various ethnic groups. I will try to explain this problem.

A nation is generally described as a body of people marked out by their common language, culture, historical traditions and common ancestral descent. Arising from this standard definition, the Igbos, Yorubas, Hausas and other Nigerian ethnic nationalities that fit this description qualify to be individual nations; each of them can easily define its own national interest, which sometimes may be in conflict with our collective national interest as Nigerians. Since no modern nation can develop in the prevailing world environment without a clearly defined national interest respected and protected by all its citizens, this problem should be addressed as a matter of importance.

The problem of ethnicity and the continuous conflict between the interests of the various ethnic nationalities and the Nigerian national interest, is a major issue that should be addressed as part of the process of consolidating our national aspirations. No modern nation can grow without a well defined national interest which must be defended and protected by all. The position today is that most ordinary Nigerians find it a lot easier to relate to their various ethnic nationalities as Yorubas, Igbos, Hausas and others than as Nigerians. We should learn from countries like the United States of America.

The United States of America is a multi-ethnic plural society made up of immigrants from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. If the citizens of the United States of America, drawn from different ethnic and racial backgrounds from all parts of the world, have been able to

define and defend their own national interest for which they are ready to make the supreme sacrifice to protect, there is no reason why we should not be prepared to do the same. If we are really serious about building a great Nigerian nation that would be a source of pride to all Nigerians, the starting point is that we should agree on our collective national interest and be prepared to defend it at all costs.

In addition to those identified earlier in this text, there are other equally disturbing impediments that we must endeavour to eliminate if we are to achieve the desired national objectives. Some of these are most relevant in our present context, especially those we inflicted on ourselves soon after independence, starting with the structure and cost of governance.

Structure and Cost of Governance

At independence in 1960, we inherited the British parliamentary form of democratic governance with a federal structure and regional governments. This federal system made it possible for the regions to develop at their own pace and in line with the peculiar needs, interests, desires and aspirations of the people of each region, whilst maintaining our collective unity and oneness as a nation. The system was not only simple and inexpensive to run; it accommodated the cultural and other peculiar needs of the people, allowing each region to develop at its own pace and on its own terms. In comparison to our present system, the most attractive feature of this system was that the cost of governance was not high and corruption was not a major problem, and under the system, undue power was not concentrated in the hands of one person at the centre.

In 1966, the military intervened and seized political power, thereby terminating the parliamentary, democratic system of governance. The new military government and those that followed it, falling in line with the nature of the military command system, introduced an adaptation of the American system of governance. Before the military finally decided to return to the barracks in 1999 and to hand over to a civilian democratic government, they left us with a constitution that provided for the American type of Presidential system with structures that are too complex and expensive for a developing nation with the high level of poverty that we have had to contend with.

Many well-meaning Nigerians have, at various times complained about this expensive system of governance. In a recent interview published in the *Tell Magazine* of January 21, 2013, an eminent Nigerian Elder Statesman and former Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, blamed the high cost of governance on the failure to achieve the great dreams of Nigeria's founding fathers at independence.

He blamed this failure on the "governance architecture which fuels corruption, political instability, and ethnic incoherence on a scale that was not imagined during the independence celebrations that attended the lowering of the British Union Jack on October 1, 1960, for the Nigerian Flag of Green and White." He further stated that "Nigeria began on the promise of religious tolerance as an example to the rest of the world" to the present situation where we now have "Boko Haram, allegedly bombing churches and so on in the North." On the absence of true federalism and the high cost of governance under our present system of governance, he stated that: "any

governance arrangement that gulps a shocking 74% of the national revenue as administrative costs alone cannot give birth to the Nigeria envisaged by its founding fathers." He further warned that "the existing structure of 36 states and a federal capital territory cannot lead to the level of stability and development that this country deserves..."

He suggested that the nation should discard the present wasteful system and return to true federalism, using the six geo-political zones as regional governance templates, instead of the unwieldy 36 states. He continued "the regions having power to develop at their own pace will save us from what I see as the destructive competition for the control of the centre, which fuels the desire by the different groups to control the centre, because whoever controls the centre controls most things."

The views expressed by Chief Anyaoku in this context are shared by most well-meaning Nigerians of his generation who would like to see a Constitutional arrangement with a political structure of governance that is not as cumbersome and expensive as our present system, so that more of our resources can be channeled to development in the interest of national progress, poverty alleviation and social stability. We hope that all these issues that impede our progress and development will be addressed, now that we have embarked on another constitutional review.

A Nigerian People's Constitution and A Fair Electoral Process

Our main problem in this context is that since independence, we have not had the political will to create a truly Nigerian People's Constitution, which addresses our

political problems in a manner that would ensure national peace, justice and stability in the overall interest of all Nigerians. We sincerely hope that our political leadership at all levels will see the urgent need for a genuine people's constitution that would ensure and safeguard justice for all, as well as a robust electoral process which ensures that those we elect to represent us, are leaders that belong to our first eleven, placing the interests of the people before their personal and sectional interests.

The Leadership Issue

The leadership issue is regarded by most Nigerians and friends of Nigeria as one of the main factors that has impeded the progress and development of Nigeria. This is understandable considering our recorded post independence experience in this regard.

As we all know, the traditional function of leaders in all human societies is to lead, direct, inspire and motivate their followers towards the achievement of the group's desired goals and objectives. Good leaders lead by the examples they set for their followers and that is why we preach the concept of leadership by example.

Most Nigerians, rightly or wrongly, believe that all the country's problems since independence have been created and sustained by the leaders and the leadership elite. In holding the leaders accountable for all our problems, no one blames the people who empower these leaders and the systems that allow them to operate with impunity even when they commit serious crimes against the fundamental interests of the people. In his book "The Trouble With Nigeria," published in 1985 by Fourth Dimension Publishers and dedicated to two great Nigerian leaders,

Mallam Aminu Kano and Sir Louis Mbanefo, Professor Chinua Achebe, the eminent Nigerian literary giant, stated most categorically that Nigeria's problems lie with the nature of the country's leadership:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership. On the morning after Murtala Muhammed seized power in July 1975, public servants in Lagos were found "on seat" at seven-thirty in the morning. Even the "go-slow" traffic that had defeated every solution and defied every regime vanished overnight from the streets! Why? The new ruler's reputation for ruthlessness was sufficient to transform in the course of only one night the style and habit of Nigeria's unruly capital. That the character of one man could establish that quantum change in a people's social behaviour was nothing less than miraculous. But it shows that social miracles can happen.

We know, alas, that transformation was short-lived; it had begun to fade even before the tragic assassination of Murtala Muhammed. In the final analysis, a leader's no-nonsense reputation might induce a favourable climate but in order to effect lasting change it must be followed up with a radical programme of social and economic re-organization or at least a well-conceived and consistent agenda of reform which Nigeria stood, and stands, in dire need of."

We agree with Professor Achebe that the personality, character and reputation of a leader could achieve a miraculous transformation of the social behavior of an unruly nation, just as we believe that good leaders, by their own examples, can transform a nation. But it is also important that every member of the group should be committed to such transformation and that the appropriate systems should be in place to support such transformation and reformation. This is why we demand and desire a Nigerian People's constitution, as well as an appropriate electoral process to guide our reformation exercise and to lay the foundation for the election of good leaders to direct and propel our key national institutions.

Insecurity, Anarchy and Threats of Disintegration

In view of the insecurity, lawlessness and threats of anarchy that we have witnessed in recent times, it would be a serious omission for us to conclude this text without a specific mention of these problems of insecurity as they affect this nation and its future growth and stability. Undoubtedly, there is a measure of insecurity, anarchy and threat of civil commotion, and killings of innocent people even in places of worship in parts of the country. It is on record that many concerned Nigerians, including some prominent Nigerians from all parts of the country have, at various times, brought our attention to these cases of insecurity. They have stressed the need for urgent action to stop these disturbing situations from leading to complete breakdown and possible civil disorder. In this situation, we are reminded that a nation, like ours, that has survived one civil war, should not allow a second civil war since we have learnt from our history books that very few nations really survive two civil wars.

Interestingly, as I was putting down my thoughts on this subject, I picked up a copy of *Thisday Newspaper* of March 7, 2013 that carried a relevant report in the form of an advice to Northern Nigerian leaders at the Ahmadu Bello University by an eminent Nigerian and former Defence Minister, General T.Y. Danjuma. He states:

"Nigeria is in total anarchy today. The danger is very real. We are in the middle of a civil war in Northern Nigeria. There is no defined front in this particular war, and worse still, the enemy is faceless and unknown. There is no immunity for anyone. Moreover, this war is highly contagious. Needless to say, the social and economic cost is incalculable. I regret to confess that I have no suggested solution."

We agree with General Danjuma that the problem of insecurity and threats of civil commotion and anarchy are real. This is a major national challenge that must be addressed by the Federal government and our security services as a matter of national priority.

The Case for High Quality Character-Building Education

Trusting that we all agree on the need for the education of our Women to the highest possible level as part of our nation building process, it must also be assumed that we all believe in the importance of education for all, men and women since a nation with a large number of illiterate or semi-literate citizens has no place in the 21st century. They say that knowledge is power. This profound statement is even more significant in the highly competitive environment of the 21st century which has been dedicated

to the advancement of education and knowledge as vehicles for the promotion of creativity and innovation.

In our own case, the emphasis should be on high quality character building education at all levels. Our universities should be better financed and equipped in all respects to compete with some of their best counterparts in the civilized world. I must state, with all due respect, that this is one more area in which our post-independence performance has not been qualitatively positive.

At independence and up to the end of the first ten years after independence, the quality of education at all levels in Nigeria was quite good and our degrees and certificates were respected in most parts of the world. Thereafter, although in terms of number of schools, colleges and universities, we recorded quantitative advances with so many federal, state-owned and private universities, the quality of the graduates from these institutions dropped considerably in terms of character, learning and education. This is one more negative effect of corruption and the decline of our national values which must be corrected as part of our transformation and reformation crusade.

Gender Mainstreaming and The Status of Women in Nigeria Today

In any serious discussion on nation-building, the role of women and the modern concept of gender mainstreaming cannot be ignored. Otherwise, how do we discuss development and nation-building if one half of our population is inadequately linked with the issues of our existence and sustenance as a nation? Women, like men, must be in the core of the nation's life at all levels if we are to attain the desired heights of development. This is the thrust of the idea of gender mainstreaming.

The words “sex” and “gender” refer to both masculine and feminine, men and women. In common usage, sex deals with the biological, whilst gender is used in the sociological sense. The position today is that the term “gender mainstreaming” has been globally accepted as a strategy for promoting gender equality, especially since supporters and advocates of gender equality seem to have hijacked the word “gender” as an exclusive term to refer to the injustice and marginalization inflicted on women in practically all parts of the world.

Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy or an approach designed to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming ensures that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy, dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.

The concept of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of society was clearly established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the Platform for Action adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing (China) in 1995. It highlighted the necessity to ensure that gender equality is a primary goal in all area(s) of social and economic development.

In July 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined the concept of gender mainstreaming as follows:

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a

strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

Mainstreaming includes gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit equally from development efforts. These are necessary temporary measures designed to combat the direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination.

Mainstreaming is not about adding a “woman’s component” or even a “gender equality component” into an existing activity. It goes beyond increasing women’s participation; it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear on the development agenda.

It may entail identifying the need for changes in that agenda. It may require changes in goals, strategies, and actions so that both women and men can influence, participate in, and benefit from development processes. The goal of mainstreaming gender equality is thus the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women.

Basic Principles of Gender Mainstreaming

Responsibility for implementing the mainstreaming strategy is system-wide, and rests at the highest levels within agencies. According to Carolyn Hannan, Director of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, other principles include:

- Adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress need to be established.
- The initial identification of issues and problems across all area(s) of activity should be such that gender differences and disparities can be detected and corrected.
- Assumptions that issues or problems are neutral should be avoided because many issues are determined by gender.
- Gender analysis should always be carried out since we cannot talk about gender-mainstreaming without recompressing the gender factor in all issues.
- Clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including additional financial and human resources if necessary, are important for translation of the concept into practice.
- Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making.
- Mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted women-specific policies and programmes, and positive legislation; nor does it do away with the need for gender units or focal points.

The Status of Women in Nigeria Today

The status of women in Nigeria has improved considerably in recent years. They have moved from the status of mere chattels of their fathers or husbands fifty years ago, to the situation today where they are active and visible in practically all aspects of our national life from government, the judiciary and the professions, to the markets and most aspects of the private sector and business enterprises. The situation now is that some men believe that the women have taken over everything and that it is the men who are now the victims of marginalization. They claim that the more women get to the centre of all activities, the more the men are displaced. This same male group also argue that the fact that more women have become actively involved in all forms of national activities, especially in politics, has not really contributed greatly to women's development as such or to poverty alleviation, because many of these empowered women soon become as corrupt and ineffective as their male counterparts, thereby proving that power is gender blind.

In any event, my submission is that more Nigerian women should be economically empowered to enable them to combat poverty at both the family and national levels. In a paper titled: 'Empowering Nigerian Women in the 21st Century: Measuring the Gap,' the authors stated in part as follows:

Generally, Nigerian women have not really enjoyed equal economic participation with their male counterparts. Yet, they form more than 70 percent of food producers in the country. The study carried out by P.I. Idisi in Delta State shows that over 90 percent

of the Urhobo women are directly involved in agricultural production and petty trading, whereas the men who own the majority of the land are not fully engaged in economic activities. Only less than 20 percent of the men are engaged in diverse non-rural economic and socio-political activities. According to Ikeoji, (2000), over 70 percent of farmers in parts of Delta and Edo States are rural women and girls who engage in a variety of farming activities ranging from clearing, to marketing and storage of food produce. In Afugiri of Abia State, women are the major food producers. They have built more than three oil mills and cassava processing centres, through their monthly financial contributions. However, they receive little economic reward for their labour, which has left most of them who have no one to care for them, in penury.

For example, in Southeastern Nigeria, women have limited access to land. Food crop production in the home base is usually for domestic and commercial consumption. But, female farmers and their household members rarely provide sufficient labour for land preparation and other farming activities, because hiring labour is quite expensive. Obviously, agricultural credit is often inaccessible to women. They rarely receive any agricultural credit for farming from any organization. In some cases, men may receive credit, but not the women. Scholars have observed, for example that out of 95 per cent of farmers in Umuleri and Mgbakwu in Anambra State, only 5 per cent (men) received agricultural credit. None of the women received any. Also, findings on gender and research outputs of 219 academics in three Universities of Agriculture, including University of Agriculture,

Umudike, show that research attainment is slightly higher for male academics than for female (Abayomi, Oloruntoba and Michael, Ajayi 2006: 88). They argue that academic qualifications and rank in the universities are significantly associated with gender. Empirical evidence shows that gender bias and discrimination in higher institutions of learning in Southeastern Nigeria is not a new phenomenon.

The situation also needs to be adequately tackled in the political sphere. In the last decade, there has been significant increase in political participation by women in Nigeria. But a lot more needs to be done. According to a report of the National Centre for Women's Development:

The proportion of seats held by women in the National Parliament increased from 3.1 per cent in 2000 to 7.5 per cent in 2008. After the 10 May 2007 elections, there were 9 female senators, compared to 4 in 2003. Also, there were 26 female members in the House of Representatives, compared to 23 in 2003. Between 2006 and 2009, 2 women were appointed to the Supreme Court bench, while female Deputy Governors increased from 2 in 2003 to 6 in 2007. Despite these improvements, women are still under-represented at most levels of government and have made little progress in attaining positions at decision-making levels.

Data from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on the April 2007 elections show the high levels of female marginalisation in Nigerian politics. For example, of the 7160 candidates that contested in the April 2007 elections, only 628 were women; 25 candidates vied for the office of the President and only 1 was a woman, while 5 women

contested for the office of the Vice President. Also, only 9 of the 109 Senators are women, while 25 of the 360 House of Representative members are women and there are only 54 female members of the State Assemblies.

This valuable statistical information clearly indicates that the status of women in Nigeria is improving and shall continue to improve since we all agree that no nation can be effectively developed in this century without the active involvement of the women who represent more than fifty percent of our population. From all accounts, it is evident that women who are economically successful are generally in a better position to influence the direction and quality of our national politics and overall societal equilibrium. Whatever we do, education of women at all levels should remain a matter of national priority, since we all agree that if you educate a woman you are in effect educating a nation. In any event, we must put in place structures, systems, legal and other measures that will enhance greater participation of women in various aspects of our private and public institutions.



CHAPTER 17



LESSONS AND CAUTIONS FOR A BETTER NIGERIA

History is an important and fascinating subject. Nations, societies, groups, organizations and individuals generally learn and progress from the lessons they imbibe from the accounts of their own history and those of others in related circumstances. Those who ignore and fail to take into consideration the systematic accounts of their past as well as their origin, progress and development, as they plan their future, do so at their own peril. It is therefore in this context and in recognition of the value of historical accounts, that we have taken the liberty of highlighting in this text, some of the major landmark events in our political history; from which we can draw valuable lessons as we work collectively towards the attainment of a better and happier Nigerian society,

founded on justice for all Nigerians. Some of these cautions and lessons include the following:

- i. No human problem has ever been settled by a civil war. Wars only aggravate conflicts and lead to more violence. In the end, the problem is only finally resolved at the negotiating table, after much destruction. More importantly, no modern multi-ethnic nation survives two civil wars and our leaders and all contending parties should bear this in mind.
- ii. In a democracy, the ultimate and sovereign power belongs to the people.
- iii. In the final analysis, truth and justice will always ultimately prevail.
- iv. The alternative to democracy and the rule of law is anarchy.
- v. The best insurance for peace, unity and development is justice and fair play for all, as victims of injustice tend to have no respect for peace.
- vi. To cope with the challenges of the 21st Century, education should be passionately pursued as a matter of urgent national priority. Nigeria must move away from being a largely ignorant and uneducated developing nation to become an educated and generally knowledgeable and well-informed nation at all levels of our society. Those parts of the country that are lagging behind should be encouraged, persuaded and if necessary compelled to move with the times in the interest of their children and their future.

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- vii. As a matter of National Policy, we should treat everyone with respect and understanding.
 - viii. We should always ensure that we deal with others the way we expect them to deal with us.
 - ix. Just as you can never have peace in a family that is divided, peace will always elude any multi-ethnic nation that maintains a system that encourages injustice and inequality amongst its citizens.
 - x. It is in the interest of the rich to protect and provide for the poor.
 - xi. Corruption and poverty are great enemies of any human society.
 - xii. For a constitution to be durable, it must reflect the genuine interest of all the people, not just a section or sections of the people.
 - xiii. Leaders are selfish, evil and corrupt because the people and the system allow and encourage them to be so.
 - xiv. In a multi-ethnic society, a leader should not protect his own people by killing or punishing others, as this would have the dangerously negative effect of sowing the seeds of perpetual national chaos and instability.
 - xv. In a multi-religious nation, the best insurance for national peace, unity and brotherly co-existence is tolerance and mutual respect for each person's religion and cultural disposition.

- xvi. In a modern democracy, the concept of the rule of law is the last hope of the ordinary citizen. The best protection for all democratic institutions is the Judiciary. An independent judicial system should be jealously guarded and protected by all citizens.
- xvii. The failure of a major financial institution like a Bank is a serious economic disaster, but the FAILURE of a NATION is a national catastrophe that should not befall a country like Nigeria. The consequences of such a national tragedy would be more than catastrophic, not only for Nigerians and the West African sub-region, but for the entire African continent.
- xviii. The leadership elite should always remember that power belongs to the people and when they entrust it to a leader, he or she must use such power to work for the development and upliftment of the people.
- xix. A good, sane and balanced leader is always conscious of the fact that no condition is permanent and that his leadership tenure will sooner or later come to an end when he or she will return to the people to give an account of his stewardship.
- xx. To promote and ensure durable national unity, peace and security as well as passionate and genuine patriotism, the leadership of the national government must work for and in the best interest of all sections of the country, without discrimination and must address and resolve,

as a matter of national priority, the problem of ethnic, regional and sectional discrimination.

- xxi. Before the civil war and the beginning of the decline, the Nigerian Armed Forces was one of the best, not only in Africa, but in the developing world, in terms of discipline, integrity and professionalism. As part of the reformation exercise, the armed forces should be equipped to return to its past glory as a first-class professional armed forces fulfilling its traditional role and protecting all democratic institutions, the rule of law and national peace and stability.
- xxii. Before the decline, Nigeria had a respectable and glorious past. Guided by the lessons that we have learnt from our collective experience and past history, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries, we should now resolve to do our very best to return our country to its past glory.
- xxiii. A leadership that lacks the political will to execute the people's mandate in the overall national interest has abdicated the right to leadership.
- xxiv. Any nation in the 21st century that does not recognize and uphold the values of justice and human rights is virtually doomed.
- xxv. To safeguard Nigeria's unity, there must be Equal opportunities for all Nigerians. This was the title of two articles published on the editorial page of *ThisDay* Newspaper of July 22, 2008 in the name of Tola Osunnuga of Ago Iwoye, Ogun State and Isunola Asi Anishere of Lagos respectively, under

the title: GIVE NIGERIANS EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES and SAFEGUARD NIGERIA'S UNITY. In view of their relevance to our theme, the articles are reproduced in part below:

(a) Give Nigerians Equal Opportunities, by Tolu Osunnuga:

There are moments in the life of man, in the life of every nation when, under the excitement of passion, the simple truth, which on most occasions, are the foundation upon which the right order and conduct of life depends, are apt to be forgotten and disregarded. Such moments are what we are witnessing in Nigeria, where our political leaders have turned their back on the common men and women who 'elected' them.

In spite of our abundant resources, millions of Nigerians are living with more discomfort, with fear, than other people elsewhere in the world. Many Nigerians have spent their lives in unrewarded toil, in anxiety, in helplessness, in ignorance and abject poverty. Governments at all levels have refused to do what is right, they take pride in milking us dry, lording themselves over us, not minding whose ox is gored.

But there is a deeper source of love of country than the material advantage and benefits it may afford. It is in the character of its people in their moral life and level of civilization. The elements of human nature are indeed so fixed that favorable or unfavorable circumstances have little effect on the lives of people.

We, however, tread on, hoping that the situation will change for the better with democracy....

The institutions established for government have been founded with the intent to secure justice and independence for the rich alone. Our governors have not only succeeded in squandering our resources but also have created fear in people such that no one dares ask any question, as doing so would either lead to branding or outright elimination.

President Yar'Adua and his lame governors are breeding a generation that will tear this country apart in the not too distant future because they lack quality education, wealth and the rudiments of leadership needed to rule. The children of the rich and the political class who turn the children of common men into their slaves would not know peace when the bubble eventually bursts. The time remaining is enough to right every wrong, open a new vista of equal opportunities accessible to all and sundry. Niger Delta needs no summit. What should be done – develop the region to the level of Abuja.

(b) **Safeguarding Nigeria's Unity, by Isunola Asi Anishere:**

It is unfortunate that Nigeria is still in a quagmire after the sharp division that characterized the political class between 1960 and 1966 and the attendant loss of lives of our leaders in 1966, the civil war, the military intervention; the deliberate distortion of the polity that has now paved the way for centralists who now loot the treasury.

It is disheartening that Nigeria has not found its feet after 48 years of independence despite the experience we have had as a nation. Indeed, Nigerians have learnt nothing from their past woes. For instance, it is an

injustice when 60 percent of what I pay as VAT is spent on other people in other parts of the country. Similarly, with regards to the oil wealth, you cannot suppress the people's will forever, no matter the power of coercion at the oppressor's disposal. The burgeoning Niger-Delta crisis is a pointer to this, why should we wait for the Niger-Delta people to resort to armed militancy before we start addressing their many grievances? Our problems stem from our greed, selfishness and insensitivity. We are imbued with every sense of perfidy and lack of patriotism. The present authorities were created to feather the nests of some greedy leaders, who want to continually be in control of the nation's resources even as their actions and inactions are detrimental to the genuine development of the country.

Nigeria has been tagged "a fragile state". Our leaders can avert the looming catastrophe by embracing true federalism, patterned along the American system or the federal system, which we practiced in our first republic. We should not put all our eggs in one basket, so that Nigerians will be free, through genuine reforms, geared towards true federalism. The restiveness in the Niger Delta is dangerous to the unity of this country and the time for a meaningful solution is now.

The palliative and unserious parleys going on now are no solutions; similar parleys have been organized that led us nowhere than where we started. The problem of the Niger Delta is a national question; if the answer is delayed, it could spell doom for the co-existence of the people of Nigeria. LET US REMEMBER A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE.

Even if we do not totally agree with the sentiments expressed in these newspaper articles, we should be humble and sincere enough to accept that they represent the views of millions of ordinary Nigerians who are unhappy about the conduct of the vast majority of the leadership elite and those they see as their exploiters and oppressors.

In any event, there are several lessons that can be drawn from these comments. The quality of our leadership elite at all levels should be taken seriously as we embark on a positive reformation of our society. The political leadership should be seen by all Nigerians to be taking positive steps in eliminating those negative features that have over the years turned the Nigerian society to a very cynical one in which many ordinary Nigerians tend to see their relatively successful brethren as their enemies and oppressors, as reflected by the views expressed, almost on a daily basis, in the Nigerian media.

Messrs Tola Osinnuga of Ago Iwoye in Ogun State and Isunola Asi Anishere of Lagos State in their newspaper contributions reproduced above have echoed what many Nigerians have been saying over the years in bars, restaurants, market places, village squares and all the traditional places where they congregate to discuss the state of their nation and the attitude of the leadership elite towards them. This was confirmed by our enquiries and findings during our research for this and our other publications. It is certainly not too late for us to begin to make amends by adopting positive measures aimed at improving our society for the general good of the people.

CHAPTER 18

THE FAMILY, NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AND REFORMATION

We cannot seriously discuss the subject of nation-building and the development of a just and humane society without recognizing the importance of the Family, especially its influence on the values and character of the individuals that make up our society. Undoubtedly, only decent and well-grounded families can produce good and reliable citizens. This fact has been recognized by all African cultures from time immemorial. It is also universally acknowledged that only well-grounded and disciplined families can produce men and women of character and sound judgment. For this reason, the family is a critical factor in our discussion on nation-building and the transformation exercise which we consider imperative as we celebrate our centenary as a modern African nation.

In the light of the foregoing, the primary message in this chapter is that although the family is the smallest unit in the social structure of every human society, it is nevertheless the most effective and reliable institution created by mankind as the foundation stone of every modern nation, which influences the values of the nation and the character of its leadership. In my book, *Nigeria at the Crossroads*, published more than thirty years ago in the early 1980s, we discussed, quite extensively, the importance of the Family in the building of the modern Nigerian nation. Interestingly, most of the issues raised in that text, remain relevant despite the passage of time, except that our traditional family values have suffered a serious decline between the 1980s and today. This tragic decline means that our reformation and transformation exercise is even more urgent and necessary, starting with the family.

The Universal Importance of the Family

The universal importance of the family was ably stated in an article I read in the British Sunday Telegraph of July 6, 1980 by Peregrine Worsthorne in which the author stated in part as follows:

Of all human institutions, none does more to promote mankind's wellbeing than the family. It is by far the most effective and economical agency for attending to the population's health, education and welfare; the only one that in practice really works. Only when the family fails – usually because it breaks up – is it necessary for the State to step in, always at great cost and usually to little effect.

Not even the best of schools can educate a child whose will to work has not first been learnt at home. Not even the best of health services can make up for the damage done to a child by a mother's bad pre-natal or post-natal care. In moral terms, the influence of the home is even more important. By the time priests or psychologists are called in, it is usually too late. All modern research tends to emphasize the unique role played by the family at every stage of human development, as much at the end of life as at the beginning. Even the poorest of family homes is a better place for the old to die than the best-equipped geriatric hospital.

A few years ago such a view would have been strongly contradicted by the experts, who were confident that they know better than mum and dad. Given the slightest excuse, they would whip babies off into some clinic or crèche for professional attention. Enormous hopes were lavished on the potentialities of advanced teaching techniques; on the value of trained social workers, etc. Mum and dad were made to feel out of date, like sailing ships in a jet age. All that has now changed and the experts are only too anxious to pass the buck back to mum and dad. Having done so much to destroy the family by undermining its role, they now admit that even a bad family does more good than the best institution."

Peregrine Worsthorne was describing the family from a British point of view, but most of this writer's statement about the value and importance of the family apply to the Nigerian society, except that at no time has the Nigerian's faith in the family wavered. No sane Nigerian family would abandon its responsibilities to its members to either the

State or to an institution. If due to poverty, the immediate family is unable to cope with its responsibilities to its dependants, the extended family will step in and shoulder the family's responsibilities.

The Traditional Nigerian Concept of Family and the Extended Family

In Nigeria, the immediate or nuclear family would normally consist of a man and his wife or wives and their children. It may also include the man's dependants who live with the family constituting the man's household. The head of the immediate family is the man and the second in command is the wife or the senior wife or the first wife where there are two or more wives in the nuclear family. The authority of the wife or senior wife only lasts for as long as the children are minors since in the traditional society, the first child, if he is a boy, assumes the position of second in command in the affairs of his father's family after his father and steps into the father's shoes on the death of the father, subject to the interests and authority of the extended family in matters affecting the extended family such as farm land in the village and property jointly owned with other members of the extended family.

It is the duty of the family or the parents to have custody of the children of the family, to control and chastise them, and to educate the children to the best of their ability and to determine the most appropriate form of religious upbringing that is good for the children. In practice, Nigerian families that are Christians bring up their children as Christians, either as Catholics or Protestants depending on the beliefs of the parents, or more appropriately on the father's religious persuasion, while

those who are Muslims would bring up their children in the Muslim faith. Parents are also obliged to give adequate protection to their children both physically and psychologically. It is illegal under the laws of Nigeria for a third party to interfere with the rights which parents have over their children. Such interference may constitute a crime, depending on its nature or if it is only a civil wrong it may entitle the parents to sue the offender in the civil courts for damages. Parents may also be liable to a third party for the wrongful acts of their children, especially where the child's wrongful act is due to the negligence of the parents in one way or the other. The customary laws and traditions of the Nigerian society also impose some duties on the children of the family. While the children are residing with their parents, they are obliged to render useful service to their parents and to the family. Such service includes the normal domestic chores, helping the parents in the office during holiday periods or working in the family farms. Children are expected, in keeping with Nigerian traditional customs to respect their parents and never to disobey their elders as any such action might result in the child being cursed by his ancestors and this might spell real doom and unhappiness for the child all the days of his life. Whether present day Nigerian youths believe in this is another matter. It is interesting to note that a good number of the youths who disobey their parents and behave in a disorderly manner tend to have things rather difficult with society these days; maybe such youths had been cursed by their ancestors!

The Extended Family Concept

Whereas in Europe and in most other industrialized societies, a man's family is limited to his wife and the children of the marriage; in Nigeria the family concept is much wider and includes the members of the extended family. The extended family concept is recognized by the customary laws of Nigeria as an important social institution which has, for several centuries played an important role in the lives of most Nigerians. Unlike the immediate family or the nuclear family, it embraces a large number of persons related by blood traceable to a common ancestor. It would probably consist of the common ancestor, his wives and children, his sons and their wives and children, his brothers and their wives and children and a number of other close relations. The extended family would normally be made up of a number of immediate or nuclear families. The basic philosophy of the extended family is that each member of the extended family is "his brother's keeper" in the true sense of the term.

Under the customary laws of Nigeria, the extended family is to all intents and purposes a corporate body which can own property and can sue and be sued in its name. Every extended family has a family head who is generally the spokesman of the family and when necessary may act as an agent for the extended family. In such circumstances, any actions he carries out in his capacity as the representative or agent of the family will be binding on the extended family, provided the action is one that was authorized. Usually, the most senior member of the extended family or the founder of the family is the head of the family. When the head dies, the normal practice is for the next most senior member of the extended family to take

over the leadership of the family unit. In Hausa land the head of the extended family is known as Mai gida or Baban gida, in Yorubaland he is known as the Dawodu, while in Iboland he is known as Onyeisi, or Diokpa, other ethnic groups in the country have a special term for describing the head of the extended family. It is unusual for a woman, however wealthy or powerful she may be, to be the head of an extended family. In matters relating to the control and management of property belonging to the extended family, the head of the family must operate like a trustee and manager of the property and must act in the best interests of the entire family. If he misbehaves or ceases to enjoy the confidence of most members of the family, he is removed and another senior member of the family is appointed to the leadership of the family. When there is a family meeting or a meeting of the family council if any, the normal practice is for the head of the family to preside.

Land is usually the normal type of property collectively owned by the extended family. In some cases, it may include buildings, but the bulk of such land is usually land for farming purposes. Each member of the extended family has an equal interest in the family land or other family property, but not a separate interest such that he can individually sell or assign without the consent of the family. Furthermore, it is settled law in Nigeria that the creditors of a member of a family cannot attach the proprietary interests of a debtor member of a family in family land. Family land may be given or allocated to a member of the family either for domestic purposes, for example, for building a house or for business purposes and his interests in the building erected by him on the family land will be protected by law. Family land can only be sold

to a third party on the agreement of all the members of the family. Any purported sale of family land by a member without the consent of other members of the family is not valid in law.

Extended Family Similar to a Social Insurance Scheme

The statement made earlier to the effect that every member of the extended family must see himself as his brother's keeper requires further explanation. The extended family system operates almost like a social insurance scheme under which the wealthy or successful members of the family are expected to look after the basic needs of the weaker or poorer members of the family. Under a modern social insurance scheme, the facilities of the scheme are used to look after the welfare and maintenance of the old and unemployed, among others. In accordance with the traditional or customary laws of Nigeria, the wealthy, employed and income-earning members are obliged to support the unfortunate members of their extended family who are either too poor to look after themselves or are either unemployed, old or too weak to fend for themselves. This responsibility, although not one that can be enforced in the courts like a contractual obligation, is not taken lightly by either the traditional society or the members of the extended family.

Extended Family's Role in Matters of Discipline, Mentorship, Succession and Community Development

The extended family system in the traditional Nigerian society is by its very nature and set-up a social safety

network in addition to providing a continuous and generational mentorship scheme. A unique aspect of the extended family's role in this context is the serious attention and commitment that the system attaches to the issue of discipline, character building and succession as methods of sustaining, for posterity, the image and reputation of the family and the community.

Under this system, the most enlightened and respectable elders within the extended family are identified and recognized as character-building agencies for this purpose. These highly principled elders in most extended families are seen as inspirational role models committed to the moulding of the character of the younger members of the extended family and the community. They are respected and revered not only as role models within their own extended families but also in the community in general. Under the system, children and young persons who display obvious leadership qualities or special talents are sent to live with these special elders and role models to acquire some measure of discipline and to benefit directly from their influence, guardianship, tutelage and upbringing. This type of attachment of promising young members of the extended family is organized to ensure continuity and succession from one generation to another.

According to my recollection, in my own extended family, at least in the past 100 years, the two most outstanding inspirational role models and elders that were respected and revered in this context, under different generations, were Mazi Onuoha Ogan, my father's maternal uncle and father of the distinguished gynaecologist, Professor Okoronkwo Ogan and later my own uncle, my father's immediate elder brother, Mazi Jacob

Nkuma Igwe both of blessed memory. My uncle was, for more than 20 years up to the 1940s, a school teacher and a strong disciplinarian in Oturkpo in the present Benue State, who later rose to the position of top grade schools supervisor and administrator in the Methodist Church in Eastern Nigeria during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

To illustrate how this system actually works, I will use my own experience as an example. I was born in the 1930s as the first son of my relatively successful parents. Before I attained the age of ten years, it was feared that if I was allowed to grow into my teens with my parents, especially under the kind of loving care that my mother was seen to be lavishing on me, that my full potential and talents would be weakened and never attained. To avoid this possibility, the family decided to consign me to my uncle, Mazi J.N. Igwe mentioned earlier, who had been identified as our extended family's institutional disciplinarian. Thus, my uncle became, in effect, my second father who spared no effort in inflicting strong and effective disciplinary measures on me, which undoubtedly influenced the future direction of my life. This was one of the effective methods employed in those days under the extended family system to promote discipline, succession and community development.

It is important to note that the identified institutional role models in this system carried the weight of the society they represented and therefore any failure of theirs was regarded as a failure of their community. It is necessary therefore to continue to develop the next generation of role models moulding them with the same principles that the society held dear, namely, honesty, integrity, selflessness, and striving for excellence in their chosen professions.

Naturally, not all those who were mentored under this system ultimately became the next generation of role models, but of the many, all that was needed to continue to propagate this system was the few who succeeded. In this way, the community's traditional practices and character were carried on through the generations. This system was structured in such a manner that meritocracy was placed above nepotism and mediocrity, as the extended family and the communal systems recognized character wherever it came from and mentors were chosen not only on the basis of filial relationships.

Undoubtedly, the extended family system, especially the social stability and mentorship roles it played, contributed immensely in the promotion of order and discipline and the development of our communities. Unfortunately, with urbanization and the impact of Western civilization on our traditional institutions, including the positive aspects of the extended family system, the days of these traditional institutions are numbered as their useful principles and practices are fast being eroded. We sincerely hope that as we rebuild, reform and transform our societies, we will endeavour to preserve those useful practices and institutions that have served us effectively in the past or in the alternative, devise appropriate and effective replacements.



CHAPTER 19



RESTRUCTURING THE POLITY

Politics is to Serve; not to Make Money

In the modern world of the 21st century, it is universally acknowledged that the primary and dominant purpose of politics and all its institutions is to serve the people; not to make money. To this end, all civilized nations generally create and design their constitutions and political institutions for the primary objective of serving the best interests of the people at all levels of society. It follows from the foregoing, that if we are to achieve our dream of a great Nigerian nation that is stable, viable and united, the starting point is to restructure the polity by putting in place constitutional provisions with structures, systems and political institutions that operate in the best interest of the people. This may sound simple and straightforward but in reality it requires a measure of commitment and

political will on the part of the players to achieve this simple but vital objective.

From all accounts, most of the political and sectional upheavals that we have experienced over the years could probably have been avoided if we had the necessary political will, vision and wisdom as well as the appropriate institutions and systems specifically designed to eliminate the negative situations that breed conflict. Our hope therefore is that our present reformation and restructuring exercise will assist in removing these negative factors.

The term polity in our present context refers to the form of political organization, structure or system of government generally accepted and adopted by the country's constitution. In practically all cases, such a political arrangement is generally accepted by the people because it is fair and equitable and respects their interests, culture and traditions as well as their general wellbeing. Arising from the foregoing, any restructuring of the polity should be designed to produce political institutions, systems and structures that can eliminate all those negative factors which have created instability and impeded our development as a nation. Most of these negative factors have been discussed extensively in this text, but those that deserve further mention will be discussed as we proceed.

The Case for a Genuine Nigerian People's Constitution

The first step in the restructuring exercise should be to put in place a genuine people's constitution which will contain the fundamental principles and basic features of the restructured polity. The importance of the Constitution

rests on the fact that it is the document that contains the organic and fundamental law of the nation which defines the structure and character of its government and other key governmental institutions. In our peculiar context, it is the constitution that determines whether the government will be a unitary or federal one; as well as forming the basis for the devolution of powers between the different levels of government and the federating units, amongst other vital constitutional issues.

Most discerning and well meaning-Nigerians and friends of Nigeria generally agree that the best political structure for a multi-ethnic plural nation like Nigeria is one that rests on a truly federal structure as advocated by our founding fathers at independence. It was the departure from this structure by the military in 1966 that set in motion the 'palaver and trouble' that this nation has witnessed and continues to witness to this day. We may never fully understand and comprehend what prompted the "young majors" to embark on their first military intervention in January 1966, but we do know that when we are all gone to join our ancestors, historians will be free to record that event as a very serious mistake and a major and tragic error of judgment that interfered with our political evolution and the orderly development of this nation, resulting in the unnecessary death of more than three million Nigerians, without resolving any of our many developmental problems.

Now that we seem to be returning to the path of sanity and peaceful negotiations for a better Nigeria, we hope that we can all agree on a new constitution that will contain provisions in support of the concept of a true federation with the six geopolitical zones or a similar provision as the

federating units with each zone running most of its affairs and developing at its own pace as was the case with the regions during the first republic in the early 1960s.

Trusting that our new constitution will have no difficulty in returning us to a true federation on the lines suggested above, other important issues that should be addressed in this context include the structure and cost of governance under the parliamentary or presidential system as advocated by many discerning Nigerians.

Other important issues that deserve further consideration include the problem of elections and the electoral process. Our expectation is that any serious review of the polity must pay attention to the reformation of our electoral process, possibly by re-examining and adopting the recommendations made by the Justice Mohammed Uwais' Committee which were welcomed by most Nigerians although most were not officially adopted.

A Case for the Parliamentary System of Government

Important as it is to restructure the nation's geopolitical arrangement, there is also a pressing need to change the system of political governance. Without mincing words, Nigeria needs to abandon the expensive and over-orchestrated presidential system of government for the less expensive, and less corrupting parliamentary system. Following the demise of the First Republic, corruption has grown in gargantuan proportions to become the most challenging impediment to Nigeria's development.

Considering the havoc that corruption has inflicted on the country's public and private institutions and the entire political system, it is expected that any reformation or restructuring of the polity will devise methods for

strengthening the seemingly endless wars against corruption. Corruption must therefore be eliminated or drastically reduced if the Nigerian dream is to be achieved. Practically, all the civilian and military regimes that have governed the country since independence have, at various times, waged some kind of “war” against corruption, without much success.

Amongst the many institutions established over the years to “fight” corruption, the EFCC has turned out to be the most effective in the eyes of Nigerians and the international community. It is considered to be one of the most effective agencies established by the Obasanjo administration to fight corruption. For the first time in Nigeria’s history, this agency has been acknowledged as the only major institution that seems to have effectively tackled the problem of corruption to the extent that some highly placed officials, including governors and top police officials were actually prosecuted by the agency. The first Chief Executive Officer of this agency was Mallam Nuhu Ribadu. Ribadu’s work, style and posture soon made him controversial; this was inevitable, especially as he appeared to have stepped on some big toes. Some accused the agency and its boss of being selective of who they investigated and prosecuted, while others, rightly or wrongly, accused the leadership of the EFCC of exceeding their powers or of acting contrary to the provisions of the existing laws. It was even suggested that it was being used by the presidency as a tool for dealing with Obasanjo’s political enemies.

When the Yar’Adua government came to power in May 2007, the new administration decided to vigorously continue the war against corruption and to retain all the anti-corruption agencies created by the previous

administration. In the case of the leadership of the EFCC, the young, dynamic and controversial Nuhu Ribadu was reassigned and sent to the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies for further training, and Mrs. Faridah Waziri, a retired senior police officer was appointed to take over as the new head of the EFCC. These changes at the EFCC attracted media controversy with some political undertones. Some suggested that the new head of the EFCC was not equipped to cope with the challenges and demands of this important agency intended to fight the problem of corruption in a complex nation like Nigeria. Others complained about what they saw as the irregular procedure adopted in reassigning the previous holder of the office.

When matters settled and all the media upheaval died down, the new head of the EFCC seemed to have resolved to prove her critics wrong and to reinforce what many women had already established in the 20th and 21st centuries; that what a man can do, some women can do even better. From all indications, she coped effectively with the challenges of the office as Nigerians and the international community watched developments with keen interest.

Apart from the EFCC, the other major agency created by the Obasanjo administration and retained by the Yar'Adua administration to fight corruption is the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). The ICPC was established under the provisions of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000. Its first Chief Executive was a retired President of the Court of Appeal, the Honourable Justice Mustapha Akanbi. When Justice Akanbi voluntarily retired,

he was succeeded by another eminent jurist, the Honourable Justice E. O. Ayoola, a retired Justice of the Supreme Court.

Despite Nigeria's chequered political history and the problems of corruption, poverty, mismanagement of the nation's resources by the leadership elite, as well as the visible disgust of ordinary Nigerians with the country's leadership, resulting in a generally cynical society, we nevertheless remain optimistic that the war against corruption will be won someday. This optimism stems from several positive signs that continue to raise our hopes and expectations; the vast majority of Nigerians would prefer to support the Nigerian experiment and do everything possible to ensure that the dream of a great Nigerian nation is not replaced by a failed nation, which some people see as a distinct possibility.

Despite this optimism, we do know that as a result of Nigeria's many political and developmental problems, the national and international media have in recent years been discussing Nigeria in the context of failed states. A few years ago, the Nigerian media reported that a United States-based international agency had reported that Nigeria would disintegrate in less than fifteen years. Naturally, most of us who are committed to the survival of the Nigerian concept condemned these reports and resolved to prove the cynics wrong. Unfortunately, since then, the national decline has continued unabated to the extent that well-meaning officials who are genuinely concerned about the level of corruption have united openly in condemning the decline. In a report published at page 4 of a Nigerian newspaper, *THE NATION* of Thursday July 10, 2008, the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes

Commission (EFCC) Mrs. Farida Waziri, while receiving a delegation from the Nigerian Bar association (NBA) led by its President, Mr. Olisa Agbakoba, briefed the NBA delegation on the activities of the EFCC in its war against corruption, explaining that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has resolved to extend the fight against corruption to all the states and local government areas in the country.

In the course of this address, the Chairman of the EFCC assured the delegation that the EFCC was taking the war against corruption to the state and local government areas in a determined effort to eradicate this problem which has done great harm to the nation by disastrously increasing the poverty level, thereby widening the gap between the rich and the poor. She added:

If care is not taken and genuine efforts put in place, Nigeria may be declared a failed nation in no distant future. If the governors at the moment have immunity against prosecution, they do not have immunity against investigation. We will go ahead, investigate them, compile a case file, update it from time and wait for when they are available, that is what we are going to do."

She further stated that local government administrations were the next targets, adding.

"We are going to be very proactive, to move to these areas with what we have, to monitor money earmarked for certain projects in those areas and crosscheck physically what is on ground and take up those we know are in positions to steal these monies."

Those who sign vouchers, those who sign cheques, those who counter sign; we will monitor them closely and when we get them, they will tell us where the monies are."

Mrs. Waziri also stated that the EFCC's legal and prosecution units would be restructured to meet the new challenges. She advocates the amendment of the law establishing the commission and other anti-graft agencies. She said:

What we have today is not encouraging, because prosecution takes so much time in the courts. We are also facing the challenges of some lawyers who are not following the ethics of the profession.

"Even when they know that their clients have a very bad case, they play for time, challenging the jurisdiction and competence of the court, so the case takes so much time. Meanwhile, the culprit is on bail and is enjoying his loot while other Nigerians are watching and many wallowing in abject poverty."

She also suggested that when people are being considered for key sensitive appointments, that in addition to the security report on such people, thorough medical examinations should be carried out to ensure that such candidates are mentally and physically fit for such appointments, especially in the context of what she described as "*primitive acquisition of wealth that has no sense or meaning.*" The President of the NBA, Mr. Olisa Agbakoba (SAN) in his own prior statement suggested that the anti-graft agency should be further strengthened to make it more effective.

“The agency’s duties of investigating, prosecution and recovery of stolen assets are enormous. In the UK, each of these is handled by separate agencies,” Mr Agbakoba promised to assist in lobbying the national assembly to amend the laws to strengthen the operational efficiency of the agency.

All these suggestions should be noted and utilized appropriately as part of the strengthening and restructuring of these agencies so as to improve on their capacity as weapons for fighting the war against corruption.

Values for a Genuine Political System

In addition to the problems of corruption, there are several other challenges which must be addressed as part of the crusade designed to ensure the achievement of the Nigerian dream. At present, the most disturbing problem which is threatening the stability of the nation is the prevailing political environment with several cases of kidnappings and political assassinations which remain unresolved because most of the culprits were never apprehended. This problem has been further aggravated by the situation in the oil rich Niger Delta Region, seriously affecting the mainstay of the nation’s economy. The earlier these problems are resolved, the better for the stability of the nation. Other positive steps that should be taken in the journey towards the nation of our dreams include:

- (a) Nigerians should embark on a positive and sincere process of national reconciliation so as to restore confidence amongst the various regional, zonal and ethnic nationalities and

interest groups. If properly handled, this would have the effect of eliminating or reducing the growing ethnic and other conflicts that have become rampant in recent times.

- (b) Education is the major tool for the development of human capital which is the foundation for unity, peace and stability. Planned investment in qualitative mass education is essential for achieving the desire national objectives.
- (c) The country should discourage its people, especially the leaders, from taking actions or making statements and publications that are of a provocative and divisive nature. To this end, the government and citizens should, as a matter of national policy and practice, begin to emphasize those things that unite rather than those that divide the Nigerian people.
- (d) The country should enthrone a culture of justice, fair play and equity in the management of national affairs and in the distribution of the nation's resources so that every Nigerian, irrespective of his tribe, status or religion, will feel a total sense of belonging.
- (e) In a developing country like Nigeria, democracy and the rule of law are very useful allies in the promotion and the preservation of national stability, unity, peace, law and order. Nigerians should therefore always remember that the surest way to incite anarchy, disunity and instability is by disturbing the efficiency and integrity of the country's democratic institutions

or by thwarting the operation of the concept of the rule of law.

- (f) Commonplace and seemingly insignificant matters such as simple good manners, courtesy and respect for the culture and institutions of others, play vital roles in the promotion of social stability, unity and peace in the Nigerian type of highly sensitive multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.
- (g) Nigerians should attach a lot more importance to the lessons from their history to avoid the many pitfalls and national tragedies experienced over the years due to the phenomenon of history repeating itself and the reluctance or refusal of the country's political leadership to be cautioned by past mistakes. It may sound simplistic, but it is important for us to constantly remind ourselves that history is an account of past events and that the world attaches great importance to historical events, to lead us away from future disastrous outcomes.



CHAPTER 20



ROAD TO THE FUTURE

We cannot seriously discuss the future without considering the present and the immediate past, guided by relevant historical facts. Nigeria became a sovereign state on October 1, 1960 when it was transformed from a British Colony to an independent sovereign state. Since then, the country has undergone several political changes, as part of its complex and traumatic political evolution. As a result of the country's chequered political history, most of the country's pessimists who describe themselves as realists, maintain that the Nigerian experiment will fail and that Nigeria has no future because it is an artificial colonial contraption, made up of different ethnic nationalities, which will ultimately disintegrate at some future date. To buttress their pessimistic position, they mention the many social and civic problems the country has experienced since independence more than

fifty years ago; the ethnic rivalries, the high level of corruption, poverty in the midst of plenty, poor leadership and the absence of political will to move the country forward to cope with the challenges of the 21st century; the various opportunities missed due to the poor performance and the virtual failure of the country's leadership elite at practically all levels of society.

In response, the optimists maintain and insist that the country will overcome its developmental teething problems and will ultimately become a great African nation and a world power that will be a source of pride and satisfaction to its citizens and the black race. To buttress their case and the reasons for their optimism, they refer to the country's various endowments, strategic values and other positive features.

Whilst we cannot afford to dismiss either the pessimists or the optimists, we do know that most Nigerians recognize the benefits that could be derived from a strong and viable African nation with all the endowments and supreme benefits of a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria. It is for this reason that they expect the country to overcome all its developmental problems so as to guarantee peace, security and national stability and the correct environment for progress and development. Although, there are several positive features that could lead Nigeria towards a brighter, more stable future, one cannot ignore at the same time, the many warning signs of Nigeria's possible disintegration. One of the objectives of this book is to draw attention to such signs in the hope that the country's leaders, especially those who genuinely believe in the survival of the Nigerian experiment, will unite and take appropriate corrective action based on justice in the

interest of all Nigerians. This, in our view, is the road to the future if we are to achieve the great and viable Nigerian nation that we deserve.

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek...”

May this profound statement have a positive impact on all our people, especially the entire leadership elite.

Leadership and the Success of the Nigerian Experiment

Although the concept of Nigeria as one nation was originally a creation of the British Colonial Administration for their own administrative convenience, it became a reality because the indigenous Nigerian leaders, the founding fathers, had the vision and the wisdom to endeavour to live together as one nation on terms agreed by them. It follows that the Nigerian nation conceived by these wise leaders, will only succeed and flourish if those systems and programmes that ensure the continued success, viability and acceptance of the union by all Nigerians, are put in place in a manner that reflects the genuine interest of Nigerians from all parts of the country.

There are several good reasons in support of the view held by most Nigerians and friends of Nigeria, that the Nigerian experiment should be encouraged to succeed. As stated earlier, in spite of the historical origin of the country, we must agree that a lot has happened over the years to convert this British experiment to the benefit of modern Nigerians. As a result, the prevailing desire of most discerning Nigerians is that this experiment should be

encouraged to succeed, in the same spirit that led the founding fathers of modern Nigeria to arrive at the same conclusion. Our founding fathers had weighed the various options before independence, and decided that it was in our best interest that the country should become an independent Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1960. Despite their political, economical and cultural differences, these founding fathers had the vision and wisdom, as well as the spirit of give and take that made it possible for them to evolve a political arrangement acceptable to most Nigerians. The political arrangement that they had so skilfully fashioned, formed the foundation for the Nigerian nation.

In their wisdom, they set the conerstones for a country based on unity in diversity, mutual respect and tolerance. They resolved to have a modern African nation in which each ethnic group respects the interests and aspirations of the others; such that no group is neglected or ignored. To eliminate sectional frictions, they created a federal government structure that was acceptable and adaptable to the peculiar interest and cultural values of all the federating units.

Things went wrong when these basic principles were undermined by one form of military dictatorship or the other. That was the point when the decay started and the situation has gone from bad to worse over the years. The result is that the Nigeria we have today is totally different from the nation conceived by our founding fathers.

Until we return to those original basic values and a system based on justice and fair play, in line with the values that made our founding fathers agree to live together in harmony as citizens of one happy country, the drift and

decay will inevitably continue, and development, progress, unity, security and national cohesion will continue to elude us. Our leadership elite must now wake up and begin to work for the collective good, rather than in continuous pursuit of their selfish personal and sectional interests and aspirations. They and those they lead must agree that justice for all must be established as the major plank of our national policy if we are to achieve our desired national goals. The political leadership and the entire leadership at all levels of our society must begin to show in all their actions that they truly want the Nigerian experiment to succeed, instead of the dubious and insincere political rhetoric we see and hear everyday.

The Nigerian experiment will only succeed if our affairs are managed and directed by selfless leaders who have the integrity and commitment to lead. Most Nigerians know that Nigeria is very highly endowed. They all agree with those who have consistently maintained that there is no justification for the present high level of poverty in the country. We all seem to understand the nature and extent of our problems, but not much has been done to change the situation all these years. It is now time for us to act. The starting point is that the character, quality and attitude of those we appoint or elect to leadership positions should be in alignment with our national interest, values, aspirations and objectives.

As we blame our leaders and the leadership elite for having let us down, we must also agree that we, the followers, have contributed to our national tragedy by our own actions and omissions. We must all accept that we cannot achieve the national cohesion and greatness that we desire and deserve until all Nigerians begin to work

positively towards the achievement of the desired national objectives. This has to be followed if the Nigerian experiment is to succeed, and as we reflect on the subject, we should constantly remind ourselves of the strategic value of Nigeria to Nigerians, Africa and the world.

The Strategic Importance of Nigeria

No discussion on the success of the Nigerian experiment would be complete without some reference to the strategic importance of Nigeria, which has been examined in several serious discussions and publications on Nigeria.

From all accounts, Nigeria is one of the most fortunate nations in the modern world. Its vast endowments of assorted natural and human resources and its strategic geographical location on the African continent make it stand out as a potentially great African nation. It has been said that Nigeria is to Africa what China is to the rest of the world. This is probably because Nigeria is the most populous country and the largest market on the African continent. Its importance also rests on the fact that it is the world's 10th largest producer of oil and petroleum, which now accounts for almost 90% of the country's foreign exports and 80% of its foreign earnings. This is contrary to the position in the 1960s, when agriculture and food products accounted for about 70% of Nigeria's exports. Apart from petroleum, the country is rich in gold, silver, coal, tin, columbite, lead, zinc, marble, graphite, and iron ore to mention just a few. We understand from recent official reports that the country's wealth, represented by the available natural gas resources, will far exceed the proceeds from the oil industry.

These national assets clearly indicate that the country has no reason whatsoever to be poor. It also shows that

under the right kind of social and political environment and better management of our resources and under committed and selfless leadership at all strategic levels, there would be enough to satisfy the need, but not the greed of every Nigerian.

In addition to Nigeria's abundant natural and human resources, other factors that emphasize its strategic value include the fact that it is the largest market as well as the largest constitutional democracy in Africa, and therefore, a major asset in ensuring the survival of democracy on the African continent. Nigeria's political and economic value to the ECOWAS sub-region is immeasurable as evidenced by its key role in this important sixteen member Economic Commission of West African states (ECOWAS), which is destined to play a major role in the social and political development of the West African sub-region. It is evident from all accounts that Nigeria has many strengths and resources that have remained largely untapped. One such strength is the country's abundant gift of highly skilled and other levels of manpower, including a large supply of outstanding world-class scientists, technologist and professionals from practically all known disciplines. There is hardly any country in the world in which we do not find highly-skilled Nigerians, in key positions in various areas of specialization. Many of these foreign-based Nigerians, being totally committed to their professions, are compelled to live and work abroad, because our society refuses to recognise and reward merit and expertise. This is a consequence of the negative features of Nigeria, that conspire to make life difficult for the average citizen. If the right environment is created at home, and the concepts of justice, equality, peace, unity and stability become part

of the national culture, most of these Nigerians living in foreign lands will return to our country and provide the expertise necessary for the development of the country. The social and economic transformation that will follow such a development would be positive and worthwhile.

All Nigerians to Contribute to Moulding the Nation

For several decades, Nigerians, especially the social critics, have continuously blamed the country's political leadership and the leadership elite for the country's numerous problems, forgetting that they were installed, elected or appointed by a system which all of us either helped to create or decided to accept. We have now reached the stage where it is imperative that every Nigerian should contribute to the moulding of a respectable and viable modern nation capable of coping with the challenges of the 21st century and one that all its citizens will be proud to proclaim as the nation of their dream.

This process should start with every Nigerian being totally and selflessly committed to the elimination of all negative factors that impede our progress and development as we do our very best to promote national unity, peace and stability. We should avoid at all times those actions that threaten the survival of the Nigerian enterprise. Although Nigeria started its journey to nationhood as "a mere geographical expression", created by the British, it has succeeded in surviving for several decades as an independent nation and the vast majority of Nigerians now accept it as their beloved country and fatherland. They have resolved to make the most of this country because they believe it is in their interest to belong to a potentially

great African nation that can boast of such vast human and natural resources.

Having made this choice, it is now up to Nigerians and their leaders to agree on the most equitable and durable political arrangement or structure that fulfils their aspirations and ensures national stability, peace and unity. While negotiating for and restructuring a durable national constitutional arrangement, we should be guided by the overall interest of the people with a genuine spirit of understanding, wisdom and compromise. The constitution should be in alignment with the foundation created by the country's illustrious founding fathers; the foundation which they negotiated and fought for at the regional self-government in 1957 and at Nigerian independence in 1960. The maturity, wisdom and understanding exhibited by these founding fathers of modern Nigeria, made it possible for the country to survive and develop unimpeded by ethnic and religious conflict such as we see today. Without suggesting that they were perfect, we must agree that their premature removal from the political scene worsened our plight without solving any problems. We therefore owe them a special tribute in our present search for the kind of unity in diversity, peace and stability that they had envisaged at the time of self-government and independence.

Nigeria at the Beginning of the 21st Century

The 21st century marked the beginning of a new revolution with remarkable changes in the modern world; knowledge being the primary feature of this highly competitive world of the 21st century. Unfortunately, Nigeria, despite its many endowments, has been identified as one of those countries

in Africa that have taken some steps backwards in developmental terms, at this period in human history, mainly due to poor leadership. Early in the year 2005, I became quite concerned about the general state of affairs in the country which motivated me to write my book, *Nigeria: The Last Chance*. While I was writing this book, a highly respected friend of mine, an Eminent Nigerian Statesman, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, whose integrity, patriotism and commitment to the Nigerian nation is unquestionable, told me that he was going to deliver an important lecture at the famous Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The title of the lecture was “*Towards A Sustainable Future for Nigeria*”. Impressed by the theme and its relevance in our present context, we obtained his permission to reproduce extracts from the text to buttress our position on the same issues in our text.

In reviewing the prevailing state of the nation in the year 2005, quite early in the 21st century, he started by assuring his audience that after forty-four years of independence, we are entitled to look back with pride at some of our achievements, but must readily admit that our politics at home, and the political structures that serve them have continued to subvert our capacity to achieve more.

As is the case with most speakers on the Nigerian situation, Chief Anyaoku, the international diplomat and elder statesman, did not hesitate to remind his distinguished audience that Nigeria is a nation of considerable character, and richly endowed with nature’s blessings and a proud and dynamic people. He continued:

Its vastness and variety, the diversity of its people and cultures, its rich natural resources, its hugely talented human resources, all these place it in good

stead to attain the highest levels of human achievements and development. As a people, we are resilient and have on many occasions demonstrated our ability to pull through considerable difficulty. In recent years, we have shown our ability to pull through considerable difficulty. In recent years, we have shown our ability to challenge tyranny, our readiness to defend our rights and our preference for the exercise of our political will. There is no doubt now that we prefer democracy to tyranny and that there is a collective will to seek the best for Nigeria on a new basis of relationship amongst the nation's diverse people.

And yet notwithstanding the creditable successes in our foreign policy, and advances with our macroeconomic reforms since the return of democracy in May 1999, our country is still perceived as a tragic example of one endowed with immense natural resources and human potential, but which appears incapable of coordinating its assets and attributes to highest utility and maximum value.

The proclamations of our national unity by the Federal Government are undermined by practical events on the ground. There are cries of marginalization from different sections of the population; communal and ethno-religious conflicts have continued to occur at intervals in various parts of the country; and aspects of the fundamentals of our constitution including the nature of our federalism, resource control and the place of religion in our government structure have remained subjects of national controversies.

There are decreasing levels of national dignity and confidence. A diminishing enrolment in education; the growing nightmare of HIV/AIDS which does not appear to be fully acknowledged, and some will say, not effectively being tackled-all these have a long term effect on our productive capacity.

Ill equipped as our institutions of higher learning are, we are hardly able to take advantage of strides in scientific and technological progress. It is a reality that will soon make nonsense of what we regard as our most prized attribute as a nation namely, our human resources.

The total of our human resources is distorted. First, our population at home sees something of the world and the future out there, how other people are managing and living their lives, and see what they can become themselves but are not able to.

The unemployment of our youth is overwhelming. The tendency is to resort to extreme measures to get what they want. The path to criminal violence is so short!

The scale of poverty, the weakness in infrastructure and the low level of our productivity in virtually every area is such that we could do with strong inflow of foreign capital in form of investment and of development assistance. However, we do not attract much of that because foreign investors consider Nigeria as inadequately stable in the long term, and donors often argue that we have the resources to meet our needs and so limit themselves to simply assisting us to develop mechanisms to better utilize what we have.

To give some practical illustrations of the retrogression which our country has experienced especially since the early years of our independence, I recall the days when across the country, the agricultural landscape was marked by various types of pyramids. There were the groundnut and cotton pyramids in the North, the cocoa pyramids in the West and the palm kernel pyramids and stacks of palm oil barrels in the East. Today, all these have virtually disappeared leaving us with a crisis in our agricultural sector.

I recall the days when being a Nigerian and travelling on a Nigerian passport earned one tremendous respect from officials of the other countries. Today, the mere mention of one's national identity induces suspicion on their part, while tendering the Nigerian passport at most ports of entry abroad could subject one to intolerable selective treatment. The root of this identity crisis lies in large part in the activities of the advanced fee fraudsters and other social deviants, but it does leave us with a public image problem as a people with attendant costs in our interaction with other members of the international community.

I recall the days when honour, truth, loyalty, integrity, honesty, dedication, good character and other similar values defined the basic aspirations of the Nigerian and determined his/her place in society, either in terms of respect or responsibility. Today, our people are driven by a pursuit of material things in which money, how much of it one has, irrespective of how it was or is acquired, invariably confers special status on people. We seem to have virtually lost our sense of values and decency as a result of the prevailing culture of materialism. We are therefore in the throes of a crisis of value systems.

I recall the days when as a student, at whichever tier of our educational system, discipline, hard work, the quest for excellence, basic comfort in living conditions, ready availability of dedicated teachers and essential teaching aids and materials for instructions provided the frame work within which students and teachers alike engaged in intellectual pursuits and the acquisition of skills.

I am informed that in this university as with many across our land, teaching aids are in short supply or virtually none-existent. Living conditions of teachers and students fall far below acceptable standards. Discipline is tethering on the verge of collapse. Excellence is suffering from severe strain. Many graduates of our educational system end up without employment partly because of inadequacy in the absorptive capacity of the labour market but essentially, in my view, because of the disjunction between skills which our society needs at this stage of its development and the quality of our graduates. In short, the signs are that Nigeria is facing a crisis in the educational sector.

I recall the days when health care delivery system was truly responsive to the needs of our people. Medicines were available in hospitals and clinics. Doctors and nurses lived up to selflessness and humanitarian principles enshrined in their vocation. Although few in number, centers of specialist medicine like the University Teaching Hospitals Ibadan, were well equipped, clean and well staffed, while secondary and primary medical services were effective and consistent with the crisis of mass exodus of doctors and nurses seeking greener pastures overseas; adulterated medicines; lack of the requisite diagnostics

equipments necessary for informed medical decisions and or interventions; and the virtual collapse of the primary health care delivery system.

I must acknowledge that in many ways Nigeria has had to contend with a complex array of challenges in her search for her destiny. It has had to contend with the profound challenges of its colonial experience as it seeks to build a truly independent nation. With its size and complexity, its challenges are of the same magnitude. It is contending with the complex burdens of the global economy.

In sum, our country remains unstable, in spite of our brave efforts to work its exhausting political machinery and keep it afloat. Corruption remains rife and has become a national trademark. The underperformance is as clear as daylight. The scale of poverty continues on the increase, and the gap between the very rich and the very poor continues to widen. A scandalously weak infrastructure continues to weaken our capacity to develop as we should. An equally weak social infrastructure continues to undermine our capacity to enhance our human resources and weaken our ability to breed the able and skilled workforce the nation needs. Our political structure and governance system, at all the nations needs. Our political structure and governance systems, at all the three tiers of government, remains top heavy and unsustainably costly.....

Where Do We Go from Here?

The National Political Reform Conference, 2005

On this subject, Chief Anyaoku had this to say:

Let me now address the question of where we should go from here. I believe that the initiative, which President Olusegun Obasanjo has taken by convening the National Political Reforms Conference, is very opportune and appropriate. The long campaign of recent years for a national conference, whether sovereign or non-sovereign was sustained on the part of its advocates, by a general desire for changes in the present structure of our polity and governance systems. I believe that the conference provides a historic opportunity for exhaustive discussion with a view to reaching national consensus on how to remodel our present constitution and governance systems in order to strengthen the unity of the Nigerian Federation and create a more conducive environment for our socio-economic development. It is my hope that the work of the conference will by itself be able to disabuse the minds of those whose cynicism and opposition to the initiative, has been based on a genuine doubt of the sincerity of the Federal Government.

As you may know, I am one of the President's nominees participating in the conference. You will therefore, I trust, understand if, in speaking about some of the areas where I believe that fundamental changes must be made to our existing political structure and governance system, if we are to achieve peace, stability and the quality of development that is commensurate with our human and material

resources, I fail to include my detailed prescriptions of the new structures that I would like to see in place. This is because I believe that it would be more discreet and hopefully more productive for me to seek to promote the prescriptions first in the national conference.

One of the areas where fundamental change is desired is in the nature of our federalism. In my view the present structure of 36 states has resulted in undue centralisation of powers in Abuja to the detriment of a true federation.

Before the military coup d'état of January 1966, the country under the federal constitution of 1960 had begun to take very promising tentative steps towards meaningful national development. To give a few examples, the success of the universal primary education programme and the booming cocoa produce of the Western Region; the impressive beginnings of industrial and agricultural enterprises including the booming produce of palm oil in the Eastern Region; and the fabled groundnut pyramids and booming hide and skin produce of the Northern Region were all evidence of Nigeria's great development potentials made possible by it then more viable and more empowered federating units of the Federation.

Besides, our present 812 governments (Federal plus 36 states government and FCT plus 774 local governments) with all their paraphernalia involve an unsustainable level of expenditure on governance. As was stated by Prince Tony Momoh in his booklet titled: "In Search of A Viable Nigeria," ‘

Our expenditure profile shows that as at May, 2002, we spent 92 per cent of our resources on recurrent expenditure. By the end of that year, we were borrowing to do so, and any vote for capital expenditure was at the expense of meeting recurrent demands like payment of salaries and allowances, and meeting our commitments to pensioners.

We have therefore had very little left for funding development. Which means that if we refuse to revisit the structures, it will be a question of time before we would be borrowing to sustain the system of government we have opted for?

We should therefore aim to return to a truer federation than what we have today, a federation of far less federating units than the existing 36, each with powers to deal with the essential aspects of development - health, education, infrastructure, industry, agriculture, water supply etc - as well as powers that would generally be akin to those possessed by the Regions in the early years of our independence.

However, in restricting the federating units, we must care to address the issue of revenue from the mineral resources with which God has blessed our country, Nigeria. It should be possible in the interest of all our people, to guarantee in our new constitution an arrangement that shares equally the national revenue from all minerals, both liquid and solid, among the federating units after deductions for the considerably reduced federal functions and compensations to the derivative regions which bear the environmental burden of the extraction of the mineral.

There is also the question of whether we should retain the Presidential, or return to the parliamentary system of government, which we had up to January 15, 1966. There are those who argue that the parliamentary system would be less expensive to run and involve much less chance of facilitating the emergence of dictatorship by a President in whom all the executive and symbolic powers of the nation are invested. They point to the example of India, a comparable pluralistic and heavily populated country where the parliamentary system has enabled the country's impressive economic development and sustained the Indian democracy for over 50 years now.

But those who canvass for the retention of the Presidential system, maintain that democracy is more sustainable when it is in tune with the culture of the people concerned, and that the concept of a symbolic head of family or community, is alien to Nigerian, indeed African culture generally. And they buttress this point by pointing out that there is only one of the 53 independent African States (Lesotho with its constitutional Monarchy) where the experience of a Head of State without executive powers is working.

I believe that this should be carefully examined and resolved on the basis of our national experience so far. Another area where I believe that far-reaching changes are called for is in the organisation and code of conduct of our politics. Ways must be found to check the role of money, and the level of violence and intimidation in our politics. So far, the mercenary rewards of politics have encouraged the emergence of politicians who are clearly not motivated by a desire to serve their people and nation, but rather, by acquisitive drive for wealth and personal fame. As a result, principles and

ideology are sacrificed on the altar of political expediency and opportunism. Politics therefore, especially at election time, become a do or die affair, and competition for votes and popular support is seldom based, as it should be, on policies and political programmes."

Our Electoral System

We must also look at our electoral system, recognising that genuinely free and fair elections are a sine qua non of true democracy. Our experience of elections in this country has in many cases been embarrassing. Some of the revelations from our election tribunals have underscored the importance of finding ways to buttress the independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission, as well as ensuring the impartiality of our law enforcement officers in their supportive role in the electoral process.

To further strengthen our true federal structure on the basis of a sustainable democracy, we must make a fundamental review of the structure of our defence and security forces, particularly our military. We must think of innovative ways to ensure that the organisation structure and disposition of our armed forces and facilities are such that as a nation, we never need succumb to surprises from within or without; to ensure that the military does not feel obliged to intervene in national politics again. There should be greater flexibility, which, amongst other things, will ensure that our men and women in the services enjoy more customary support while they are serving their country.

In the past, its single centralised structure made it easier for the military, or those sections of it which

were so minded, to be tempted all too easily to take matters into their own hands. The balance sheet of such interventions is very much a matter of public record. In a decentralised structure however, in which each commander is directly accountable to the commander-in-chief, it would be harder for the commanders of federating units to join forces to stage a coup.

There are precedents from the experience of other countries, which confirm the usefulness of this approach.

In my view, only increased power to more viable federating units which confers on them a corresponding responsibility to be conscientious over their individual security will stiffen the sinews of national security. And by this I mean an inclusive definition of security, such that the well-being of the individual redounds to patriotic zeal to defend national security.

In our multi ethnic country at the outset of the twenty-first century, we must update and refine our definitions of power and control to meet contemporary requirements. We must recognise that in this era, people are more aware of their God-given rights and are more prepared than in the past to defend them, if possible through extremist means; the jackboot process of governance is irrelevant, precisely because it will not achieve the intended result, namely, the quiescent resignation and acceptance of unquestionable power.

We are in the era of participation and transparency, and this is not mere rhetoric. Today, power has shifted from the realm of domination to participation and co-operation.

Our new constitutional structure should aim to be as inclusive as possible; and should eschew the 'winner-takes-all' tyranny, which is increasingly going out of fashion. It should stress the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy emphasising ways for strengthening the unity of the country. In our society, this is the only way to give full expression to our plurality; by refocussing our terms of political thinking and discourse, from strategic objectives for achieving narrow sectional interest, to more all-encompassing ideas and values that address the well-being of each citizen.

Only in this way can we come close to defining our national interest in a global context, and to muster the will of all our citizens to uphold it in every sphere of this rapidly changing world. We can also in this way guarantee consent, and ensure participation and compliance with international norms of modern democracy in our own country, not only because of the moral authority it lends our position abroad, but also because of the strength it lends our governance at home.

In conclusion, from time immemorial, the state and the art of statecraft have been represented by various metaphors: a living organism with interdependent functioning parts which fulfill their individual roles to ensure continuation of life; a house whose structures from the foundations through its walls to the roof-top will need to be conceived and skillfully executed to meet the need for which it is intended; a home in which the governance process or system and structures of power and authority are calculated to serve the interest of the family; a ship braving the seas in its perennial voyage suitably built and under

the direction of the master skipper to pilot it through the vicissitudes of the oceans with the objective of docking safely at harbour at the end of its journey.

The Nigerian project has worked so far not because the experience has been most palatable, but because fortunately, there has been, and is still, the hope that the patience so far shown by its people will prove worthwhile; that the Nigerian idea will become a more fulfilling and rewarding reality for all its citizens.

What I have sought to do is to suggest that the idea will indeed consolidate into a great reality if we learned the lessons of our past, and recognise, as a result, that we should grasp the nettle to forge sound structures on sound foundations fit for our national home..."

Chief Anyaoku's lecture was delivered to a most distinguished audience made up of eminent academics, traditional rulers, diplomats, top government officials, students, university dons, and a cross section of the Nigerian leadership elite and friends of Nigeria from the international community. The response and ovation that followed showed that the guest speaker had spoken what was in the mind of this distinguished audience. Some who commented on the lecture agreed that those were the words of a genuine leader and an elder statesman genuinely and totally committed to the common good and the well-being of the people.

As a statement of the direction we should take to ensure the success of the Nigerian experiment, Chief Anyaoku's prescriptions and injunctions should be commended and supported by the political leadership and

the entire leadership elite, especially those actively involved in the drawing up of the country's constitution. In doing so, we will be taking a positive step towards influencing our political direction, putting in place structures for a sustainable democracy, that will lead to the building of a great nation.

Chief Anyaoku's account of the state of the Nigerian nation was delivered a few years ago. Since then, little has changed. Most of the problems are still very much with us. Several others before him have spoken on similar lines. The main difference is that in sharing his perception of our problems and the state of the nation, he did so with candour and sincerity, in clear refined language as would be expected from a seasoned world class diplomat such as he is. Interestingly, this lecture took place just before the inauguration of the National Political Reform Conference in 2005. Chief Anyaoku's view, as expressed in this lecture was seriously canvassed at this conference; with limited success. The mileage gained at that conference, was lost however, because the political will, national unity and commitment necessary to make such an adjustment does not exist. We sincerely hope that we will do a lot better at the 2014 National Conference.

We have inserted these views in this text, in the hope that the political leadership and the entire nation can be made to realise the gravity of the situation and the urgency for taking steps to save this potentially great nation from disintegration. Unfortunately, the overwhelming influence of the minority of delinquents in the country's leadership, especially those who have accumulated much money from dubious activities, always ensures that nothing good ever lasts; thwarting every attempt we make to clean up our

society. We hope that by drawing attention once again to these negative features, Nigeria may be rescued from the strong grip of the delinquents in leadership positions and their collaborators, so as to ensure the success of the Nigeria experiment.

CHAPTER 21

THE FUTURE AND OUR
TRANSFORMATION AGENDAS

In the chequered political history of modern Nigeria, there is nothing new in government policies with impressive agendas of transformation, reformation and reconstruction. We have seen them in different forms from most governments since the amalgamation and birth of modern Nigeria in 1914 and 1960. Apart from their cosmetic political attraction, all that these transformation agendas have in common is that they never really achieve these lofty objectives which they promise to aspire to when they are publicly proclaimed by the administration that formulated them.

It is on record that successive administrations in Nigeria have, in the past three or four decades, advanced different transformation and reformation policies to bring this nation out of its predicament, but most of these policies

have failed to achieve the promised objectives for several peculiarly Nigerian reasons. We will mention just a few recent examples. President Shehu Shagari whose administration lasted from 1979 to 1983 described his own policy in this context as "*The Green Revolution*". The plan was that the Green Revolution would reform the agricultural sector which would in turn, from the gains of the revolutionized agricultural sector, revolutionise other key sectors of the economy. Unfortunately, this seemingly well conceived policy died a natural death when President Shagari's government was removed in a military coup in December 1983.

The transformation programme during the short spell of the military administration under General Muhammed Buhari was devoted to fighting corruption and indiscipline in the polity. Thereafter, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida took over the mantle of leadership in 1984 and hinged his administration's policy package on the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). General Sani Abacha built his policy thrust on the exploitation of domestic efforts towards transforming the economy and at the same time, de-emphasizing the reliance on the influence of International institutions. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo used his first tenure to consolidate the nation's democracy and embarked on a number of reforms in the financial and telecommunications sectors of the economy. The brief period of the late President Umaru Yar'adua at the presidency was devoted to pursuing a 7-Point Agenda.

In the run-up to the 2011 elections, President Goodluck Jonathan prosecuted his campaigns with, the declaration of his plans to "transform Nigeria." Having won the elections, the president, on May 29, 2011, reiterated

his desire to transform Nigeria by unveiling a five-year development plan titled "Transformation Agenda". To champion this development plan was an assemblage of a 28-man team of technocrats drawn from different disciplines, under the Chairmanship of the President himself and the coordination of a renowned Economist and Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. This new Transformation Agenda is broadly focused on three critical areas which include strong, inclusive and non-inflationary growth; employment generation and poverty alleviation and value re-orientation of the citizenry. The transformation agenda aims to reposition the economy by addressing the critical issues of poverty, unemployment, insecurity and the diversification of the entire economy from total dependence on oil to a significant reliance on a non-oil driven economy.

The minister of Trade and Investment in the cabinet of President Jonathan, Olusegun Aganga, described the Transformation Agenda *"as a policy that revolves around good governance, power, security and development of non-oil sectors such as manufacturing, solid minerals, investment in infrastructure, education and anti-corruption crusade"* (IT and TELECOM DIGEST, 7 FEBRUARY, 2012). President Jonathan, under this Transformation Agenda, hopes to transform the whole economy of Nigeria through the use of thirteen key sectors as the spring board. The strength of the Transformation Agenda lies in the following: a carefully thought-through policy document; a world class Economic Management Team to drive the process; a potential financial, human and political resource base; a growing maturity of major institutions of governance such as the National Assembly, the Judiciary, an electoral umpire

and the Armed Forces; and the needlessness to re-invent the wheel as several strategic plans are already in place.

While providing details of the Transformation Agenda, the minister for national planning, Dr. Samshudeen Usman repeated the strong, inclusive, non-inflationary growth, employment generation and poverty alleviation and value re-orientation as key areas of the Transformation Agenda. The minister further identified elements of good governance: security of lives and property, law and order, an anti-corruption crusade, public service reform and the creation of a conducive environment for all and sundry to achieve their full potential, the provision of critical infrastructure such as electricity, roads, railway, water ways and water for irrigation, etc. Other areas of special interest are education, healthcare delivery, and skills acquisition. The minister noted that the government would expedite action on constitutional and electoral reforms to provide the needed legal framework for the policy guidelines; surmount security challenges, create an enabling environment for private sector participation; encourage synergy and policy collaboration among sectors. According to the National Planning Commission Blueprint (2011), the Transformation Agenda is designed to address every aspect of the socio-economic and political life of the citizenry.

Halfway through his tenure, President Goodluck Jonathan presented his administration's scorecard to the nation in a report titled, "The mid-term report of the Transformation Agenda 2011 -13." The president declared that the mid-term performance Review of his administration was to enable Nigerians see the progress made so far in implementing the policies, programmes and

projects captured in his Transformation Agenda [2011-2015]. As expected, the economy occupied a prominent place in the Review.

The coordinating minister for the Economy and Minister for Finance, Dr Ngozi Okonjo – Iweala admitted that the global environment has been quite challenging and volatile due to the global economic and financial recession of 2008. Due to the contraction of most developed economies of the world, the Nigerian economy had been negatively affected because of the reduction in the nation's crude oil sales which led to a decrease in the country's revenue. The minister identified the following factors which had retarded economic growth: the trepidation that the euro zone crises could spill over into other countries, weak recovery in the US real estate market, limited success in fiscal consolidation in most developed countries, the attendant sovereign debt crisis, increase in the price of oil and other commodities, as well as the boom and bust cycle in emerging markets.

On inflation, Dr Okonjo-Iweala noted that the global economy recovering from the recession resulted in an increase in the price of goods and services in emerging and developing economies, while inflation levels were generally low in advanced economies.

Sectoral Growth Analysis

The sectoral analysis of the growth rate in the context of the Transformation Agenda targets reveals that eight sectors of solid minerals, building and construction, real estate, financial institution and insurance, transport, public administration, and other services had exceeded their targets. On the other hand, the other sectors including

the major drivers of the economy did not meet the Transformation Agenda targets.

Available data shows that gross fixed capital formation dropped by 2.61% in nominal terms from N4.01 trillion (US\$26.68 billion) in 2010 to N3.91 trillion (US\$ 25.41 billion) in 2011, meaning that the investment target of N6.42 trillion per annum needed to grow the economy by 7.49% was not met. With this development, the level of investment remains too low to muster the necessary momentum in the Transformation Agenda. The shortfall is due to the weak link between the capital expenditure provision of 1.63 trillion per annum Transformation Agenda and the actual capital budget of 0.78 trillion per annum showing a shortfall of N0.85 trillion per annum in 2011-2012. To address this, the current effort to restructure the budget and ensure that capital expenditure is fully implemented should be encouraged.

Job Creation

The unemployment rate in Nigeria has been on the increase over the years. This explains why the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan views unemployment, especially that of the youth, with great concern. Little wonder that job creation is one of the pillars of the Transformation Agenda. In order to resolve the sorry state of youth unemployment in Nigeria, a number of sectoral issues, particularly in labour intensive sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, housing, building and construction and sports had to be addressed. The minister identified three major factors as being responsible for the increase in unemployment. They include an increase in the size of the active population and labour force, with the

inability of job creation to keep pace with the growth in the labour force, as well as the current method of regarding people as unemployed if they work for less than 40 hours and the nature of the economy where many Nigerians engaged in the informal sector are generally not captured in the employment survey. To this end, the current administration has initiated a number of programmes to tackle the unemployment challenge in Nigeria. Among them are The Youth Enterprise with Initiative in Nigeria (YouWIN) inaugurated in October, 2011 to provide jobs for between 80,000 to 110,000 currently unemployed Nigerian youth over a period of three years. The motive is not to create jobs as such but to create job creators. The programme is jointly run by the Federal Ministries of Finance, Communication Technology (MCT) and Youth Development which organise an annual Business Plan Competition (BPC) for aspiring young entrepreneurs in Nigeria. So far, over 6,000 youth have been trained in business plan development with an additional 1,200 young entrepreneurs selected being supported with special grants. Again, in January, 2012, the Public Works and Women/Youth employment (PW/WYE) project was launched by the President. The objective of the project was to create short-term job opportunities for 185,000 women and youth through labour intensive public works.

As at February 2013, about 119,680 Nigerians have benefitted from the scheme across 774 local government areas with an additional 70,363 graduates prepared to benefit in the Graduate Internship Scheme. The Agricultural Transformation Action (ATA) planned by the Government, Dr. Okonjo-Iweala noted, was to provide a comprehensive strategy to increase domestic food

production, reduce dependence on food imports and expand value chain addition to locally produced agricultural products. According to the minister, 2.2 million jobs have already been created in ATA's first year. The launch of Youth Empowerment Agricultural Programme (YEAP) is expected to engage 740,000 young commercial farmers and entrepreneurs with an attendant effect on job generation. Other options being explored by the federal government are the Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDC) which is a partnership between the federal and states governments and various organisations. The expectation is that EDC would provide training for 75,000 persons (45,000 high school leavers) and (30,000 graduates). A total of 25,210 entrepreneurs had been trained by the end of June, 2012.

The National Enterprise Development Programme (NEDEP) is being formulated under the coordination of the federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment. The programme which seeks to create 3.5 million direct and 5 million indirect jobs, between 2013 and 2015, will centre on technical/business and entrepreneurship skill acquisition, access to finance, improving market access and business environment for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The One Local Government, One Product programme under the NEDEP framework is intended to take the pilot projects that were performed on 6 products in Kano and Niger states in conjunction with the Japanese government to various states of the federation. The purpose is to identify a product that can be grown in commercial quantities in each local government area, and to provide relevant Business Development Service (BDS) Entrepreneurship training and funding. SMEDAN has been

engaging the states in the mapping of scalable products in each local government.

Fiscal Development

Income generation in the country has been quite encouraging over the years. Most of the revenue has come from oil which has been on the increase from ₦5,396.09 billion in 2010 to ₦8,848 billion in 2011 indicating a 63.98% rise. This increase could be linked to enhanced oil production as a result of relative peace in the Niger-Delta region due to the amnesty programme. Internally Generated Revenue of the Federal Government has risen from ₦6,362.56 billion in 2010 to ₦10,059 billion in 2012. The federal government's total actual budgetary expenditure moved up a little by an average rate of 1.15% annually to ₦4,299.16 billion in 2011 and ₦4,130.58 billion in 2012 from ₦4,047.06 billion in 2010. As at March 2013, the actual budgetary spending rose by 11.41% to ₦963.77 billion. Recurrent expenditure which gulped an average of 80.30% of the total expenditure per annum, moved up by 3.52% to ₦3,380.61 billion in 2011 and ₦3,386.06 billion during the first quarter of 2013. Lower spending on petroleum subsidy led to a drop in recurrent expenditure at 0.16% in 2012 as against 6.87% growth recorded in 2011. The plan to raise capital expenditure to 27.06% has remained elusive as the nation could only achieve 21.37% and 18.03% in 2011 and 2012.

The overall financial position shows that the federal government has maintained a fiscal deficit because retained income is less than the total expenditure.

The Financial Sector Development

In view of the negative effect of the global financial crisis on Nigeria's financial system, efforts are being made to promote a sound and efficient financial system in the country. A number of reforms have been initiated in the areas of regulation and supervision. As part of the reforms, universal banking model has been discontinued to enable banks focus on areas of core competence. At present, the banking sector has been segmented into international, national, regional, mono-line and specialised banks with varying capital requirements. Banks were mandated to divest from real estate subsidiaries by June, 2013. Significant achievements have been made in financial system surveillance through on-site examination, routine risk based supervision of foreign subsidiaries of Nigerian banks and spot checks in the financial system.

Good Governance

The attainment of the Transformation Agenda will be a mirage if the issue of good governance is not taken seriously. This is why the Government has highlighted the important role of good governance to the achievement of the Transformation Agenda and Vision 20:2020. Good governance features which include Accountability, Inclusiveness, Equity and Social Justice, Observance of the Rule of Law and Due Process, Legitimacy of Political, Economic and Administrative Authority, Effective institutions, Purposeful leadership, Security and Order and Transparency, are essential to the realisation of the Transformation Agenda because they provide a conducive environment in which any government programme can thrive. It is in this regard that the public service is being

repositioned for optimal performance and service delivery. The Steve Oransanye committee was set up to identify MDAs that perform similar or duplicate functions with a view to merging them in order to reduce the cost of governance.

Oil and Gas

In the productive sector, Oil and Gas has maintained its pre-eminent position in driving the economy, contributing more than 95% of export earnings and close to 85% of government revenue in 2011 and 2012. The sector witnessed an addition of 1.047 billion barrels in reserves to 37.119 bbs in 2012 from 36.042 bbs in 2011 while the actual gas flared was put at 20% in 2012 as against 24.3 and 25.8% in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

Trade and Commerce

Wholesale and retail trade rose by an average of 10.5% and contributed 28.4% on average of the growth in real GDP in 2011 and 2012. This sector, in an effort to engender economic growth, improve competition, expand markets, generate jobs, raise national and personal income as well as reduce poverty, has a number of goals to meet. They include the implementation of “Commerce 44” initiative which seeks to develop and promote the export of 11 agricultural commodities, 11 manufactured products and 11 solid mineral products with high potential for marketing in 11 countries/regions of the world using best practice, raising non-oil export by 90% over a three-year period, improve the ease of doing business ranking by at least 103 points by 2015, improve Nigeria’s global competitiveness ranking by 75 points by 2015 and increase FDI inflows by 150% by 2014.

The wholesale and trade sector has, during the review period, recorded the following achievements: the signing of the Foreign investment Protection Agreement with Canada in 2013 to guarantee the safety of the investments of contracting parties in the event of unforeseen circumstances, Re-engineering of Nigeria's Commodity Exchange operations with upgrade of Abuja Securities Exchange to Nigeria Commodities Exchange. Others include the reduction in transit time of goods within the ECOWAS sub-region through the implementation of the Sea Link Coastal Ferry Services Projects, amendment of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) Registrations to make the business registration process more efficient and cost effective, leading to potential annual savings of N1 billion to investors and exportation of 117 products to 103 countries in 2012 through the 'Commodity 44 initiative'.

Manufacturing Sector

The manufacturing sector which engages mainly in import substitution activities accounted for GDP average 4.18% in 2011 and 2012 and reached an average growth rate of 7.60% during the period reviewed. The major targets of the sector include the increase of the manufacturing sector to GDP from 4% in 2010 to 8% in 2015, to improve capacity utilisation from 54.67% in 2008 to 65% by 2013, reduce cost of doing business by 60% in 2013, increase local content in manufacturing from 22% in 2010 to 65% by 2015, establish a cement technology institute for the training of the manpower required in the industry to make Nigeria self-sufficient in cement production by 2014, achieve self-sufficiency in sugar production by 2015 and the provision of US\$3 billion special fund for the revamping of ailing

industries and increase access of manufacturers to long term credit by 2013.

Consequently, the sector achieved these milestones as well as the commissioning of the US\$2.2 billion Western Metal Product Company (WEMPCO) limited complex in Ibafo Ogun state with an installed capacity of 700,000 metric tonnes of steel annually and generating 5,500 jobs, the development of National Irrigation Rehabilitation project (NIRP) with the focus on the entire value chain of sub-sectors where Nigeria has comparative and competitive advantage, attainment of Nigeria as a net exporter of cement instead of a net importer of cement among others.

Solid Minerals and Metals

This sector has the capacity to engage 5 million Nigerians but it currently employs 450,000 directly and about 2 million indirectly. The sector has as its mandate the empowerment of Nigerian Geological Survey Agency (NGSA) to produce 20 maps of 1:100,000 per annum (with accompanying literature and bulletins) to achieve 100% coverage by 2020, produce 3 million tonnes of liquid steel yearly, attain 30% compliance rate in global best practice by 2013, achieve the capacity to inject 50% skilled manpower needed for the mineral and metal sub-sector, reviving coal-fired power plant in order to contribute 30% to power generation in Nigeria by 2013 and to increase the level of bitumen production to cater for the local market particularly in the area of road construction.

The gains made so far include the launch of four 1:100,000 geological maps (sheets 111(Goniri), 153 (Maru), 220 (Igangan) and 221 (Oyo) One (1) 1:250,000 sheet 49

(Shaki) in 2012, accelerating the development of Eta Zuma coal mine, rehabilitation work of 30% undertaken on Nigerian Iron Ore Mining Company (NIOMCO) Itakpe beneficiation Line 2, as well as installation work of 90% on the NIOMCO super-concentrate plant in 2012, training of the 34 students of the Nigeria Institute of Mining Geosciences (NIMG) in practical-oriented programmes comprising Post Graduate Diplomas in Mineral Exploration, Mining and Minerals Engineering, a rise in mineral production by 143.6% in 2012 from an increase of 21% in 2011 as well as an increase in the number of mineral titles issued from 2,476 in 2011 to 3,616 in 2012 and the generation of 904200 new jobs in 2012.

Water Resources

The water resources sector is charged with a three-pronged task: the provision of water for irrigation, power generation and adequate water for both industrial and local consumption. Nigeria is capable of producing an estimated 319 billion cubic meters comprising an estimated 267 billion cubic meter surface water and 52 billion cubic meter of ground water. This is driven by the following objectives: increased water supply access from 58% to 75% by 2015, increased national water supply coverage in the country from 47% to 50% by 2013, increased irrigable land from 80, 000 to 150,963 by 2015. In realising these targets, the sector has witnessed an impressive resurgence of activities. Abandoned dam projects have been resuscitated and are at various stages of completion in order to boost year-round farming, potable water supply and power generation.

The Future and the Transformation Agenda

The above is a summary of the main principles of the policy objectives of the Transformation Agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, including some of the areas in which the government has started the implementation of these policies. Whilst most discerning Nigerians appreciate the existence and objectives of these policies and programmes, and the enormous work being done in promoting the achievement of the desired national objectives, many actually question the durability and effectiveness of these programmes, especially in such areas as the creation of jobs. In this context, many Nigerians, especially the youth, insist that they are yet to feel the impact of the jobs that are said to have been created in some sectors under the Transformation agenda as millions of young Nigerians are seen roaming the streets in search of these elusive jobs. In the face of this jobless situation, and the fact that some sectors are finding it difficult to meet their set targets under the transformation agenda, the cynics are reminding us that the current transformation agenda may go the way of similar programmes in the past.

Before we proceed to examine the future of this potentially great nation in the face of our many trials and tribulations, perhaps we should first attempt to answer three important questions prompted by our comments on our many reformation and transformation programmes and agendas. These questions are as follows:

- (a) Will President Goodluck Jonathan's Transformation Agenda succeed where others before it have failed?

- (b) How can we ensure the success of the Transformation and Reformation exercise as part of our tribute to our Founding Fathers and our national heroes who paid the supreme sacrifice to ensure the achievement of the Nigerian Dream?
- (c) What Future Should we expect if the anticipated Reformation and Transformation Fail To Materialise?

The extent of government's sincerity and commitment to the success of the transformation programmes is a major factor in the drive towards its success. It is in this context that we welcome the announcement that a team of 28 world class technocrats and experts drawn from different disciplines have been assembled under the coordination of a renowned economist Dr. Ngozi Okoji Iweala to drive the Transformation exercise to the desired national success.

The journey towards the success of the transformation agenda would be a lot smoother and faster if we are able to eliminate and substantially remove all the known impediments that militate against our progress and development. The most critical in this context is corruption. If corruption is not seriously tackled as part of the reformation and transformation exercise, the Transformation Agenda may end up as a failure. As stated earlier in this text, there is an urgent need for the strengthening of our anti-corruption agencies so as to make them a lot more effective in the endless war against corruption.

The civil service is the service arm of the government that is expected to see through most aspects of the

transformation agenda and must be appropriately equipped and reformed to raise it to global best practices standards. The self-cleansing efforts of the judiciary should be encouraged and intensified so that this important arm of government will be available to play its proper role in the transformation of the nation.

On the issue as to how the people of Nigeria can assist in ensuring the success of the Transformation and Reformation exercise, our submission is simple and straightforward. We should all be part of the whole exercise by being fully involved in the exercise both as individuals and as families and groups. We should do so with sincerity and total commitment and as a special tribute to our founding fathers and all our national heroes who paid the supreme sacrifice to ensure the achievement of the Nigerian Dream.

The Future

What Future Do We Expect if the anticipated Transformation and Reformation does not materialize?

If we fail to transform our society, the obvious answer is that the drift will continue until we are able to introduce the desired changes that will transform our society and our lives. All the reformation and transformation agendas proposed by all our leaders in recent years from Shagari to Buhari, Babangida, Obasanjo, Abacha, Yaradua, Jonathan and others before them were conceived in good faith. They were all designed to clean up our society and to remove the negative factors that were delaying our progress as a nation. It is because the transformation

exercises failed that we are yet to achieve our dream of a great Nigerian nation.

Our submission is that our future depends entirely on the people of Nigeria and the choices and decisions we make. Judging by the prevailing state of the nation and the accounts that we have reviewed in this context, two situations are possible in the not too distant future, one positive and the other negative. If we are able to eliminate all or most of those negative factors that impede our progress and development, through the reformation and transformation measures we adopt, we should be able to achieve the great nation of our dreams as envisaged by our founding fathers. If on the other hand, we allow the rot and drift to continue, we could quite easily end up in a state of anarchy, disorder and total failure. Some people have suggested a possible break-up and disintegration of the Nigerian enterprise in the midst of the drift and anarchy that could follow, if our reformation and transformation efforts fail. But our view is that disintegration in that sense may not happen as no ethnic group and no part of Nigeria will benefit from the confusion that will follow such an event, and no Nigerian ethnic group will benefit from such a break-up.

In the final analysis, our best plan is for the nation's entire leadership elite to come together and work out the best way to pursue the reformation and transformation of this nation so as to build the kind of future we deserve in the overall interest of all Nigerians. If we are to consider another national conference in this context, it might be useful to examine the recommendations of the National Political Reform Conference in 2005. The recommendations of that conference were quite

formidable, but were not implemented because the necessary political will did not exist at that time.

In response to a question as to how we arrived at our present situation of decline in our national values, Chief Emeka Anyaoku in the *Tell Magazine* interview mentioned earlier, stated: "Because the country as a whole, enthroned mediocrity, the likes of Soyinka, J.P. Clark, Achebe were not in a position to direct this country. You see, in this country, we enthrone mediocrity by putting the emphasis not on what one is able to do but where one comes from. I accept that in a country as diverse and pluralistic as ours, you need to allow for diversity in the exercise of power, but you can do it without destroying meritocracy. The emphasis has always been on the so-called federal character, where the people come from, not what they are able to do. How can a country that fields only its second eleven hope to develop."

We cannot fault the answer. Until we begin to appoint the best available Nigerians to key positions irrespective of their sex, state of origin, religion and ethnic origin, we will continue to get poor results. We can devise other methods of ensuring the equitable distribution of our national wealth and appointments without the enthronement of mediocrity and the abandonment of merit. In any event, there are good and competent persons in all parts of Nigeria and no one section has a monopoly of good or bad leaders. All that is important is that we should always ensure that only the best are retained to direct our national affairs so that we can return to the good old days when only the best were elected to leadership roles in the country.

Nigeria has the human and natural resources to lead her to the promised land. Apart from our founding fathers and mothers, especially Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, all of blessed memory, who placed the interest of the nation above their personal interest, I can recall several other important members of the leadership elite in their time who gave their best to this country in their respective fields. In this context, I recall such great personalities as Dr. M. I. Okpara, Sir Akanu Ibiam, Mallam Aminu Kano, Dr. Simeon Adebo, Dr. Pius Okigbo, and many others dead or alive. We can still reinvent some of these selfless leaders who gave their best for this country. There is no shortage of good people in Nigeria today. Our problem is that the systems and values we apply today either deprive us of the services of such people or just frighten them out of the jungle of our political and public life. We hope that our reform and transformation agenda will encourage our good and competent people to come forward to serve our country.

By the year 2030, Nigeria has the potential to become one of the 20 most successful nations in the world. During his recent visit to Nigeria, former President Bill Clinton of the USA stated that during his term as President, he and his advisers agreed that Nigeria was amongst the 10 most important nations in the world. These are all good signs which confirm that this country has a great future if only we, the people of Nigeria can get our act together.



CHAPTER 22



THE CASE FOR A COMPLETE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

Although the importance of a genuine national reconciliation has been discussed at several points in this text, we consider the subject important enough to justify a repetition in this concluding chapter as part of our final plea to the leadership elite. As we pursue our national reconciliation agenda, we should constantly remind ourselves that no great nation was ever built on hate, intolerance, divisive ethnicity, refusal to forgive, religious conflict and injustice. Therefore, if we are to achieve the great Nigerian nation of our dream, we must seriously embark on a complete and total national reconciliation; this must be pursued with sincerity and commitment by all Nigerians, following the good example set by the leadership elite.

Interestingly, as we were working on this concluding chapter, some important events relevant to the theme of this book occurred. The first of these events, chronologically, had to do with former President Obasanjo's 18 - page open letter of December 2, 2013 to President Jonathan and the varied media comments it generated. The second event was the death on December 5, 2013 of the former first black President of South Africa, Dr. Nelson Mandela, a universally recognized symbol for the meaning and purpose of true leadership

Dr. Mandela, through the circumstances of his early role in the anti-apartheid movement, his leadership of the African National Congress, his 27 year incarceration for political activism, and his later role in leading the reconciliation of black and coloured South Africans and their white oppressors, became the bench mark for African leadership. Following his death in December 2013, tributes and eulogies poured in from all parts of the world, and eminent leaders and the ever vibrant Nigerian media were not left out. Nigerian political leaders and Presidents past and present also paid their glowing tributes.

Of the many tributes, the one that had a close personal touch was that of Chief Emeka Anyaoku, the former Secretary General of the Commonwealth. In view of its direct relevance to our present theme, we have taken the liberty of reproducing this tribute as published in the *Thisday* newspaper, in some detail as follows:

'In the gallery of world statesmen of the twentieth century, Nelson Mandela occupies an exceptional position. His name will be forever linked with the struggle of the South African people to end apartheid, the coping stone of the racism and the injustices to

which they had been subjected for so long. However, this is not the heart of the matter. What sets Mandela apart in world history is the charity with which he led the struggle against apartheid and at the rendezvous of victory, successfully barred the way to any form of recrimination or racial vainglory on the part of the victorious majority. It was the end to which every step in his long and eventful journey had been directed.

I will leave it to his countrymen and comrades who were by his side in the heat and dust of the struggle, to tell the world of the unique qualities of leadership he brought to bear; and confine myself to only what I saw of him as we worked together to achieve a negotiated end to apartheid especially in the wake of his release from prison in February 1990.

At the beginning of 1986, I visited South Africa. with the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) appointed by Commonwealth leaders to bring about negotiations between the apartheid regime and the opposing political parties. Mandela was still in prison at Pollsmoor, and it was there that we met him. He had been incarcerated for 23 years, but the years of incarceration appeared to have left no mark on his spirit that I could detect. A number of other things also struck me about him: his personality was both warm and magnetic; he exuded a natural and effortless authority; and although already well into his sixties, he remained ramrod straight in spite of his unusual height. Here, I concluded, was one of nature's true aristocrats. I knew and felt that we were in the presence of a special being, and so when later I came to write about him, I recalled William Hazlitt's essay on 'Mind and Motive' where he paid tribute to those

“who walked by faith and hope,” who “live in the midst of arrows and of death” but on whom the world has no hold.

The apartheid regime’s Minister for Prisons, Kobie Coetsee, had requested that he and his officials be present at our meeting with the inmate Nelson Mandela. It was left to the two EPG Co-Chairmen and myself first to ascertain Mandela’s reaction to the request. I still remember the magisterial confidence with which he told us: “Let him and his team be at our discussions because there is nothing I will say to you that I have not told them”.

We briefed Mandela on the discussions at the Nassau Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting that had led to the appointment of the EPG and its mandate. He listened attentively, and expressed wholehearted support for the mission. However, in the same breath, he stressed that while he personally supported the objectives, he could not speak for the ANC. Only the leadership in Lusaka could speak on behalf of the party, and he hoped we would go there to seek the party’s view. This epitomised Mandela’s unique humility and modesty. The world might regard him as the embodiment and conscience of the struggle but he insistently saw himself at that moment and always, as no more than an individual within the party, deferring to the party leadership at every turn.

On another one of his visits to London, at the end of a lunch I hosted for him in my residence, Mandela made the following remarks which again epitomised the special person he was. In a reminiscent vein, he spoke about the divisions within South African

society that the Second World War had brought about, and the contrasting positions between his father's generation and his own. The older generation was ambivalent as to which side to support. In their view, there was nothing to commend the white South African Government which was supporting Britain with the Prime Minister General Smuts in the forefront of the war effort. They could not overlook the fact that they had taken Britain's side in the Anglo-Boer war only to have their hopes of a better deal betrayed. Mandela observed that his own generation took a different position. As they viewed the situation, the stakes involved in the Second World War were much greater than any local grievances, however protracted, and for this reason, they worked and prayed for a British victory. The higher good, not the parochial advantage: that was what always guided Mandela.

In December 1991, the long expected and hoped for negotiations between the government and the political parties were finally launched at Kempton Park in Johannesburg within the framework of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). I sent a small but high powered group of senior Commonwealth statesmen to the inauguration, not only to show support for the process, but also to underscore the importance that the Commonwealth attached to the success of the negotiations. However, just as the talks were beginning to make progress, a wave of violence broke out in many parts of the country, including a massacre of no less than six supporters of the ANC at Boipatong.

If the violence had been allowed to subvert the negotiations, it would have been the end of everything

that Nelson Mandela and his generation had worked for. To be sure, the struggle would have resumed, but in those circumstances it would have been practically impossible to keep it within the old, established moral perimeters: non-racialism and minimum violence. These were values that the ANC leadership had worked so hard to inculcate into black South Africans over the years, values that had been overwhelmingly accepted. The South Africa that might have emerged from such a renewed struggle would be one reared on dust and ashes and Mandela did not care to think of such a society. In this affirmation the real Mandela stood out. It remains an unforgettable image in my mind and, I am sure, in the minds of many others who were present at the Union Buildings amphitheatre in Pretoria on May 10, 1994 to witness Nelson Mandela take the oath of office as the first democratically elected President of South Africa. I still remember the tears of joy that rolled down the faces of so many at that wonderful occasion.

At the end of apartheid there were voices within the country that wanted some of the egregious racist criminals, in the days of apartheid, to be tried and punished. They may not have put their demands in terms of Nuremberg, but that was clearly the spirit of what they were asking for. The decision to replace a Nuremberg-style process with a Truth and Reconciliation process was a dramatic exemplification of the best of a national leader, allowing his head to see further than his heart when confronted with an intractable moral problem. The world has been several shades saner and safer for that rare example of statesmanship.

In Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, South Africa finally found the man who gave the lead to the people of South Africa in all their “human varieties” to resolve the intractable challenge of apartheid regally and heroically’.

Of particular note in this tribute are the special qualities of leadership that were required at a time of great national distress, when it would have been easier to take the path of retribution against the real crimes (and criminals) of the apartheid era. Instead, Nelson Mandela, almost single-handedly, pushed for, and became, the symbol for true national reconciliation.

Although the circumstances of Nigeria’s problems and challenges in nation building, and the conflicts that have arisen over the years are not exactly similar to Nelson Mandela’s and the South African peoples struggles with the apartheid regime, some parallels can be drawn from the bitterness, hatred and conflicts that they both generated.

The Nigerian leadership elite have a lot of lessons to learn from the spirit of forgiveness, maturity and humanity generated by Mandela’s leadership qualities. If these lessons are translated into our National Reconciliation process, Nigeria will certainly do very well as a nation founded on love, tolerance, forgiveness and the spirit of ‘give and take’, since we know that no nation can be built on hatred, intolerance and injustice.

The second of these incidents, was an 18 - page ‘open’ letter, published on the 2nd of December 2013, from a former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo, to the sitting president, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan, in which he expressed a number of concerns on the direction in which the nation was headed. The intention

here is not to indicate support or otherwise for the contents of the letter and its subsequent responses, but to indicate the impact of such public disagreements by the country's political leaders, past and present, on the psyche of the Nigerians they purport to lead and on our societal equilibrium and desire for a complete national reconciliation.

Amongst the many media reactions to former President Obasanjo's letter to President Jonathan was a reported Press Release by Afenifere, one of Nigeria's leading ethnic organizations, in the form of a "Warning to the political class". This statement was described and titled "PRESS RELEASE: Obasanjo's Letter, Coup Baiting! Afenifere Warns Political Class" Posted December 30, 2013, and signed by Yinka Odumakin as National Publicity Secretary on behalf of Afenifere. The Press Statement reads as follows:

"Afenifere is compelled to issue a timely warning to the Nigerian political class and their military fronts on the dangers of resorting to the military option as the final act in the orchestrated hysteria being created in the polity as the law of unintended consequences does not unfold until after the event.

We are issuing this warning, as we can no longer ignore the rumor that has been very thick in the air that some forces that want to abort the proposed National conference are scheming to exploit the challenges of our democracy to cause an unconstitutional change in the polity.

All citizens of our country with a sense of history would have been able to draw a parallel between General Obasanjo's December 2 letter to President

Goodluck Jonathan and a document circulated in January, 1976 entitled "FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT MURTALA-A WARNING TO THE NATION".

Gen. Murtala Muhammed was assassinated a month afterwards. Interestingly, General Obasanjo was prominent among those copied the document.

Also, in the days preceding the coup against the Alhaji Shehu Shagari government in 1983, Gen. Obasanjo was very loud in criticizing the government. Thirty years after that act of treason, Mr. Max Suollin in SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE has rightly captured what was happening as "coup baiting" with generous quotation of IBB's confessions that those who staged the 1983 coup actually asked Obasanjo to come and lead the government, a request he turned down while encouraging the putsch.

" Question: "it was also said that those of you who ousted Shagari actually wanted to bring back General Obasanjo as Head of State in 1984. Is this true?"

Babangida: "It is true. But to be very fair to General Obasanjo, he rejected the offer. He said no. He said it would destroy his integrity: that he handed over to Shagari and that it is not right for him to get involved. But he (Obasanjo) said he was not stopping us from going ahead with the plot". "(Soldiers of Fortune, Max Suollun, pg. 14)

It was little wonder that while Gen Obasanjo issued another in the series of his infamous letters against Babaginda Military Junta in 1992, the "evil genius" quickly ran from Abuja to Otta and followed up with reshuffles in the military high commands. The same IBB is the first person Obasanjo copied his letter.

This is why we in Afenifere are not impressed with the sinister letter from the ever manipulative and evil agenda setting General who has never shown any pure motive since he started his interventions in our national affairs.

It is therefore the height of foolhardiness and or a lack of any sense of history for members of the political class to be enabling these Generals who have not been known to act in the collective interest in their infamous careers.

Have our politicians forgotten so soon what the country went through for six years when Abacha was enabled to overthrow the Shonekan Interim Government in 1993?

We do not argue that Nigeria does not have serious challenges at the moment but we refuse to accept that the solutions to our problems would come from any group of military adventures. It is a jaded option that we have been offered over the years and it has always created more problems than the ones it promises to solve.

On a more fundamental note, there is a delicate balance in the country at the moment which has made the proposed National Conference the most veritable platform to address the crises facing Nigeria and for which the nationalities are rearing to go.

To attempt to stop that process by staging a coup would amount to rushing Nigeria to a major catastrophe as any group of military adventurers may discover there is no space for them to preside over.

It is therefore in the best interest of all that all those who are possibly plotting to cause crisis in the country

perish the thought and allow the National conference to proceed seamlessly so that the people of Nigeria can proffer their own solutions to our challenges so we can emerge a united and prosperous entity from the table of brotherhood.

This is our patriotic approach to nation building, which we commend to all reasonable Nigerians”.

The Afenifere press statement reproduced above is one of the many media reports, for and against, prompted by Obasanjo's open letter to Jonathan. The reader is free to draw his or her own conclusions, but our plea is that all those who aspire to leadership positions at all levels of our society should learn to place our collective national interests above individual and sectional interests. This is the only way to ensure the achievement of a genuine national reconciliation and the great nation of our dream. We pray that the national conference proposed for the year 2014 will become a reality, addressing and resolving all those negative factors that impede our national growth and development and above all, that God will give us the political will to adopt and implement its recommendations.

African Leaders Have Useful Lessons to Learn From Mandela's Political Philosophy

An interesting feature of Obasanjo's letter to Jonathan and the death of Mandela shortly after is that they seem to have provoked both negative and positive reactions and have given the leadership elite an opportunity for self-examination and soul searching. In practically all their tributes to Mandela's leadership philosophy, all Nigerians and indeed most African Leaders agree that Mandela was

an exemplary and selfless leader who placed the interest of the people above all other considerations. They also are in agreement that African leaders have very useful lessons to draw from the life of this great hero who is universally respected and adored.

In one of his own tributes to Mandela, President Goodluck Jonathan, at a memorial service in honour of the late South African President made a clear and unambiguous reference to the key differences in the leadership example of Mandela and that of past and present Nigerian leaders, without excluding himself. The relevant sections of his comments published in the Nigerian Sun Newspaper of December 9, 2013, reads as follows:

'President Goodluck Jonathan at the memorial service in honour of late South African President, Dr. Nelson Mandela, yesterday said Nigerian politicians clearly lack the qualities that distinguished the late anti-apartheid hero with their quick call for disintegration and provocative remarks. President Jonathan said going through the many comments attributed to politicians in the media in recent times, he had since concluded that it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for Nigerian politicians to be truly great. He said statements of intimidation, threats and hate from Nigerian politicians were not attributes of great men as symbolised by Mandela. The President regretted that the unwarranted statements of politicians were not limited to a particular generation alone, as those who were older than him, his contemporaries and the younger generation, were victims.

He described the former South African leader as a rare character, who all politicians must learn from and do more to better the lot of their country. According to him: "Mandela is a rare character that those of us who are politicians need to learn from, so that we will imbibe some of his traits and do better for our country.

"If you listen to those of us who are politicians in Nigeria from all political parties - from PDP, to now APC but beginning as AD and ACN, to ACP and others- the way we talk: some talk as if Nigeria is their personal bedroom that they have control over.

"Read the newspapers listen to the radio and television or go to the social media and see how politicians talk. Some of us even think we are little gods. We intimidate, we threaten, we show hate in our communication. These are definitely not the virtues of great men. They are shockingly the voices of tiny men. Sometimes when I listen to politicians, the ones older than me, my contemporaries and even the younger ones, I come to the painful conclusion that it is probably easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a politician to be truly great." The President stressed that Mandela had done well to prove that one can be a politician and still be truly great because he placed the interest of his people above his own interest. He said the deceased would always be remembered and honoured by mankind as one of its "greatest liberators, a wise, courageous and compassionate leader, an icon of true democracy, a selfless servant who truly placed state interest above self." Jonathan added that great names do not necessarily mean that the bearers of those names are

great. He based his argument on the fact that there were many great names among the political circle, who were dictators and ran a repressive and oppressive government. He said: "Definitely, Nelson Mandela was a great man by all standards but greatness itself can be interpreted in many ways. Some people make big names, particularly in the political circle but could that be greatness?"

The President said Mandela, whom he referred to as a great son of Africa, was considered great because he had the spirit of forgiveness and succeeded in uniting his people. He said although he was neither the originator of the struggle in South Africa nor was he the only person jailed, he was one person that endured his pains with dignity and made sacrifices to show clearly that he stood for the people and not himself. Jonathan said when the former South African leader took over he could have behaved like "some elders we know in our continent who would have put on the battle glove, ready for vengeance."

These comments by President Goodluck Jonathan further emphasize the need for the National Transformation agenda to include, as a critical component, the need for a genuine National Reconciliation of all sections of the Nigerian society including the ethnic, religious and cultural. The South African example, inspired by the Nelson Mandela political philosophy can be used as a template for a Nigerian Truth and Reconciliation process, so as to achieve the complete and total national reconciliation we desperately require.

A Plea to the Political Leadership Elite

As we celebrate our first 100 years as a Nation, our final plea to the entire Nigerian leadership elite is that we should be guided by the Mandela spirit as we work, with total commitment, towards the achievement of a complete and total National reconciliation. This is the legacy we must hand over and that we owe to unborn generations – to take the challenging, but ultimately rewarding steps, towards putting our dearly beloved country on a path to becoming the Great African giant it has been widely proclaimed to be.

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Safari Books Ltd
Ibadan, Nigeria

ISBN 978-978-8431-44-2



9 789788 431442